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THE DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY SUNNITE *HADĪTH* CRITICISM

The Taqdimā of Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī
(240/854-327/938)

BY

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INTRODUCTION

In the most basic terms, ḥadīth are the texts recording the words and actions of the Prophet Muḥammad. Although these texts were avidly studied by Muslims for centuries, it is generally acknowledged that Ignaz Goldziher inaugurated the modern era of ḥadīth scholarship in the West with the second volume of his *Muhammedanische Studien* (Halle, 1890). Despite the fact that this widely-ranging work remains the best general introduction to the study of ḥadīth, it is primarily remembered for publicizing the view that most ḥadīth were fabricated many years after the death of the Prophet. He believed that most ḥadīth do not accurately portray the words and deeds of the Prophet. Goldziher argued that partisans in the early doctrinal struggles forged ḥadīth in order to provide Prophetic confirmation for their own views and therefore for the modern scholar the chief value of ḥadīth lies in the light they shed on the later development of Islam rather than the life and views of the Prophet.

Since the time of Goldziher, scholars have examined different source material and drawn different conclusions about the authenticity of ḥadīth as Prophetic documents. Joseph Schacht built on the work of Goldziher in the article "A Revaluation of Islamic Traditions"¹ and the book *The Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence*.² For the most part, he set aside the numerous reports in the classical sources describing the history of ḥadīth transmission. Instead, he examined the actual usage of ḥadīth in the earliest surviving works on law. He discovered that the ḥadīth ascribed to the Prophet were not accorded any special status in the early texts and in fact were in some works outnumbered by references to later figures. This led him to question whether there ever was "an authentic core of information going back to the time of the Prophet."³ Although his name is commonly associated with the radical rejection of the authenticity of all ḥadīth, Schacht's actual position was less controversial. He cautioned that we must consider every legal tradition as a product of a later date

¹ *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1949, 143–54.

² Oxford, 1950.

³ "Revaluation," 147.

"until the contrary is proved."⁴ Researchers working with other material have reached conclusions broadly similar to those of Schacht.⁵

While other scholars challenged Schacht's conclusions, they did not for the most part attempt to re-interpret the evidence of the early legal texts he used.⁶ Instead, they drew attention to the reports in the classical sources describing the early use of writing to record ḥadīth, which they regarded as the guarantor of the authenticity of the ḥadīth.⁷ This view is well presented by Nabia Abbott in the second volume of her *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri*⁸ and Fuat Sezgin in the first volume of his *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*.⁹ Sezgin concluded that ḥadīth were transmitted in written form from the time of the Prophet while Abbott placed the beginning of writing ḥadīth about a century later.¹⁰ More recently, another scholar has examined the same material and concluded that the writing of ḥadīth did not begin until considerably later.¹¹

G.H.A. Juynboll took a different approach to the problem of the origin of the ḥadīth. In his *Muslim Tradition*, he included a study entitled "A tentative Chronology of the Origins of Muslim Tradition (pp. 9–76)." Here he turned to the genre of historical reports known

⁴ "Revaluation," 149. Noel Coulson argues "that an alleged ruling of the Prophet should be tentatively accepted" until its falsity is demonstrated; *A History of Islamic Law* (Edinburgh, 1964), 65. He also presents his views on ḥadīth in "European Criticism of *Ḥadīth* Literature" in *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Arabic Literature to the Umayyad Period*, ed. A.F.L. Beeston et al. (Cambridge, 1983), 317–21.

⁵ See, for example, Robert Brunschvig, "Ibn 'Abd alḥakam et la conquête de l'Afrique du Nord par les Arabes," *Annales de l'Institut d'Études Orientales de l'Université d'Alger* 6 (1942–47):108–55 and Rafael Talmon, "Schacht's Theory in the Light of recent Discoveries concerning the Origin of Arabic Grammar," *Studia Islamica* 65 (1987):31–50.

⁶ An exception is M.M. Azami, *On Schacht's Origins of Muhammadan Jurisprudence* (Riyadh, n.d.).

⁷ Cf. Gregor Schoeler, "Mündliche Thora und Ḥadīth: Überlieferung, Schreibverbot, Redaktion," *Der Islam* 66 (1989):226–27.

⁸ *Studies in Arabic Literary Papyri II: Qur'ānic Commentary and Tradition* (Chicago, 1967). She succinctly restates her views in "*Ḥadīth* Literature—II: Collection and Transmission of *Ḥadīth*" in *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Arabic Literature to the Umayyad Period*, 289–98.

⁹ 10 vols. (Leiden, 1967–95), 1:53–84.

¹⁰ For criticism of this approach, see John Wansbrough's review of Abbott's book in *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 31(1968):613–16 and G.H.A. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition: Studies in Chronology, Provenance and Authorship of early Ḥadīth* (Cambridge, 1983), 4–6.

¹¹ Michael Cook, "The Opponents of the Writing of Tradition in early Islam," *Arabica* 44 (1997):489–91.

as “firsts” (*awā’il*), which purports to document who initiated certain practices. These reports were first organized into collections in the fourth/tenth century and cover a wide variety of firsts from both Islamic and pre-Islamic times. Juynboll’s systematic analysis of the reports pertaining to the study of ḥadīth led him to conclude that “the earliest origins of standardized ḥadīth cannot be traced back earlier than, at most, to the seventies or eighties of the first century”¹² and that the systematic authentication of ḥadīth did not begin any earlier than 130/747.¹³

Although very few scholars have, like Schacht, gone so far as to question whether any authentic ḥadīth exist, little has been done to recover them.¹⁴ Juynboll candidly doubts whether a method can be found to separate the authentic ḥadīth from the unauthentic: “Surely it is unlikely that we will ever find even a moderately successful method of proving with incontrovertible certainty the historicity of the ascription of such to the prophet but in a few isolated instances.”¹⁵ Elsewhere, he suggests the best tool is “a keen sense for what seems true and what false.”¹⁶ Largely lacking from the discussion over the genuineness of the ḥadīth has been an examination of the methods the early collectors used to authenticate them.¹⁷ After all, no one has ever claimed that all ḥadīth are genuine and early Muslim scholars accepted that ḥadīth were altered and forged outright for both laudable and evil motives. The traditional Sunnite view holds that the ḥadīth contained in certain collections gathered by individuals living two centuries after the death of the Prophet are more or less genuine. Although there are many reports praising the intelligence,

¹² *Muslim Tradition*, 23. See also pp. 10, 73 and 75.

¹³ *Muslim Tradition*, 20, 75.

¹⁴ For a recent study which attempts to date certain ḥadīth to the 1st/7th century, if not exactly to the time of the Prophet, see Harald Motzki, “The *Muṣannaf* of ‘Abd al-Razzāq al-Ṣan‘ānī as a source of authentic *aḥādīth* of the first Century A.H.,” *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 50(1991):1–21.

¹⁵ *Muslim Tradition*, 71.

¹⁶ “On the Origins of Arabic Prose,” in *Studies on the First Century of Islamic Society*, ed. G.H.A. Juynboll (Carbondale, 1982), 168. Schacht, on the other hand, warned against letting historical intuition “take the place of sound historical criticism;” “Revaluation,” 143.

¹⁷ One notable exception is Juynboll’s examination of two *mutawātir* (widespread) ḥadīth in *Muslim Tradition* (pp. 96–133). However, it should be kept in mind that for the most part the critics of ḥadīth who will be discussed in this work did not employ this term or acknowledge the significance of widespreadness; see Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddimat Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ wa-Maḥāsin al-iṣṭilāḥ*, ed. ‘Ā’isha ‘Abd al-Raḥmān, 2d ed. (Cairo, 1989), 453–54.

scrupulousness and energy of these early collectors, for the medieval Muslim the authenticity of the ḥadīth in these books rested ultimately on the consensus of the Muslim Community that they were authentic.¹⁸ (It has been pointed out that the notion that consensus can confirm the authenticity of these collections itself rests on a ḥadīth from these collections.)¹⁹

The present study examines the early Sunnite collectors of ḥadīth and the techniques they employed to determine the genuineness of ḥadīth. In the second volume of his aforementioned *Muhammedanische Studien* (p. 144), Goldziher stated that the criticism of ḥadīth transmitters reached maturity with Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī (240/854–327/938). Although a comprehensive examination of all of Ibn Abī Ḥātim's works would be very valuable, this study concentrates on the *Taqdīmat al-ma'rifa li-Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa-'l-ta'dīl*. The *Taqdīma* is Ibn Abī Ḥātim's introduction to his famous biographical dictionary *Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa-'l-ta'dīl* and is aimed at providing a defence of the techniques of the collectors of ḥadīth against the polemical attacks of their detractors. In it he purports to trace the history of ḥadīth criticism from its earliest practitioners up to the time of his own father, Abū Ḥātim al-Rāzī (195/811–277/890). The present work emphasizes those aspects of the *Taqdīma* which link it most closely to the milieu in which it was written and the general principles of the collectors of ḥadīth. It is hoped that this approach will illuminate not only Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his work, but also the movement of the critics in general.

¹⁸ See, for example, Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddīma*, 170–71.

¹⁹ Wael Hallaq drew attention to the circularity of the classical argument in his paper "The Authenticity of Prophetic Hadith: A Pseudo-Problem," delivered 19 March 1998 at the conference *Hadith: Text and History* at the Centre for Islamic Studies of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London.

CHAPTER ONE

ḤADĪTH IN THE TIME OF IBN ABĪ ḤĀTIM

The earliest centuries of Islam witnessed the emergence of a number of competing sects, a sight which distressed Muslims of widely varying backgrounds who feared that Islam would disintegrate into innumerable feuding factions. Thinkers in some circles came to regard this breakdown of the perceived cohesion of the original Muslim community as the product of the differing approaches to the formulation of doctrine prevailing among the various sects. They felt that if consistency could be imposed in the way doctrines were arrived at, uniformity in the doctrines themselves would follow naturally. With this purpose in mind, some scholars advocated the primacy of the Qur'ān and ḥadīth in doctrinal matters. The chief obstacle to the application of this program was the presence of contradictions within the ḥadīth corpus. Some scholars tried to resolve these contradictions through the use of reason. Others, and Ibn Abī Ḥātim was among their number, authenticated ḥadīth on the basis of what they considered to be the objective criteria of ḥadīth criticism.

I. The Adherents of Ḥadīth and their Rivals

For most of first two centuries following the death of the Prophet, Muslim intellectual life was divided up among a number of major cities. Although these intellectual centers were never completely isolated from one another, the general orientation of their inhabitants appears to have been inward. The work of the scholars in these centers, although often of a high intellectual caliber, was characterized by an approach to the formulation of doctrine which seemed inconsistent and haphazard in the light of the rigorous attitudes of later times. These early scholars drew their doctrines from a number of sources, including the Qur'ān, local custom, their own notions of fairness and what they knew of the teachings of the Prophet, his Companions, the Followers and other early scholars. Among these pioneers, we find little of the consuming interest in identifying the

main sources of doctrine (*uṣūl*) and determining their relative priority that is so pronounced in succeeding generations.¹

Working in relative isolation and employing different methods, it is not surprising that the early religious scholars arrived at conflicting answers to the questions facing the Muslim community. Early on, certain thinkers began to recognize this as a problem, especially in the field of law where practical considerations made uniformity particularly desirable. We find that a call for legal uniformity is already sounded in the treatise *al-Risāla fi 'l-ṣaḥāba* of Ibn al-Muqaffa' (ca. 102/720–139/756)² and a century later it was al-Jāḥiẓ (ca. 160/776–255/868) who made the same point in the tract entitled *Kitāb al-Futūyā*.³ The reports concerning various caliphs asking scholars to draw up a single legal code for promulgation in the Muslim empire, whatever their ultimate historicity, also bear witness to the persistence and prevalence of the ideal of legal uniformity.⁴

With the passage of time, some scholars came to call for the placement of greater emphasis on the ḥadīth ascribed to the Prophet. Ḥadīth were connected with the concept of *sunna*, a practice rendered normative by the prestige an earlier personage. In the nature of things, this practice was usually known only by means of reports and the ḥadīth were the reports which served as the documentation of the practice of past authorities. There were many figures, including the Prophet Muḥammad, his Companions and the Followers, whose views the earliest Muslim scholars considered authoritative to some degree. The demand which sprung up in some quarters that special emphasis be given to the ḥadīth of the Prophet is best understood as a product of the impulse towards uniformity. Whereas the consultation of a number of different authorities on a given question was bound to yield a number of different answers, one might reasonably expect that the reference to a single authority would pro-

¹ J. Schacht, *Origins*, 6–10.

² Ed. Muḥammad Kurd 'Alī, *Rasā'il al-bulaghā*, 4th ed. (Cairo, 1954), 125–27. This aspect of the text is discussed in J. Schacht, *Origins*, 95–96 and J.D. Latham, "Ibn al-Muqaffa' and early 'Abbasid Prose," *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Abbasid Belles-Lettres*, ed. Julia Ashtiany et al. (Cambridge, 1990), 68–69.

³ The work itself has not survived, but the letter al-Jāḥiẓ wrote to the chief *qāḍī* Aḥmad b. Abī Du'ād (d. 240/854) announcing its publication has been edited in Charles Pellat, "A Propos du *Kitāb al-Futūyā* de Jāḥiẓ," *Arabic and Islamic Studies in Honor of Hamilton A.R. Gibb*, ed. George Makdisi (Leiden, 1965), 538–46.

⁴ For an example of this kind of report, see Ibn Abī Ḥatīm, *Taqdimat al-ma'rifa li-Kitāb al-Ḥarḥ wa-'l-ta'dīl*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Yaḥyā al-Mu'allimī al-Yamānī (Hyderabad, 1371/1952), 29.

duce a single answer. The Prophet represented the one figure whose authority all Muslims respected. Echoing a verse of the Qur'ān (4:59), the great scholar of ḥadīth Ibn Ḥibbān al-Bustī (270/884–354/965)⁵ says of him, “In the case of a disagreement, it is necessary to refer to his *sunna*, since he is the undisputed resort of all.”⁶

Ibn Abī Ḥātim was one of those who called for increased reliance on the ḥadīth from the Prophet. For him, the Muslim intellectual world was divided into two camps on the basis of their approach to the sources of religious doctrine. On the one side were the “adherents of ḥadīth” (*ahl al-ḥadīth* or *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*), the scholars like himself who demanded that ḥadīth be given priority in the derivation of doctrine. Opposed to this view were the “*ahl al-ra'y*” and “*ahl al-kalām*.” These were the scholars who maintained the old approach to the sources. (Collectively he calls the *ahl al-ra'y* and the *ahl al-kalām* the “Kūfans” or “Irāqians” in reference to the supposed birthplace of their doctrines. For the same reason, he sometimes calls his own colleagues the “Hijāzians.”) In particular, it was the prominence these scholars gave to the use of human reason in the formulation of doctrine that attracted the scorn of Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his fellows. The designations *ahl al-ra'y* and *ahl al-kalām* imply that the members of these movements preferred using their own intellect in the formulation of doctrines to relying on divine guidance in the form of the Qur'ān and ḥadīth. The term “*ra'y*” originally meant a “considered opinion” and was wholly neutral in connotation.⁷ When employed by Ibn Abī Ḥātim, it means the formulation of an opinion in the field of law in a capricious and arbitrary fashion. He uses the term most often in reference to the members of what we now recognize as the Ḥanafite law school. “*Kalām*” is the concept corresponding to *ra'y* in the field of theology and means “speculative theology.” Again the implication is that rather than consult the Prophet's dictates on theological matters, these scholars favored exercising their own intellects. Most often the name “*ahl al-kalām*” was applied to the members of the Mu'tazilite theological movement.

⁵ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:189–91.

⁶ Ibn Ḥibbān, *al-Sīra al-nabawiyya*, ed. al-Sayyid 'Azīz Bak (Beirut, 1407/1987), 25. See also, id. *Kitāb al-Majrūhīn min al-muḥaddithīn wa-'l-ḍu'afā' wa-'l-matrūkīn*, ed. Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm Zāyid, 3 vols. (Mecca, n.d.), 1:5.

⁷ Ignaz Goldziher, *Die Zāhiriten: Ihr Lehrsystem und ihre Geschichte* (Leipzig, 1884), 10–11; trans. Wolfgang Behn, *The Zāhirīs: Their Doctrine and their History* (Leiden, 1971), 10–11.

The main objection of the adherents of ḥadīth to the approach of the *ahl al-raʾy* and *ahl al-kalām* was that the exercise of reason was necessarily arbitrary, and it was precisely this arbitrariness which precluded any possibility of uniformity. Ibn Qutayba (213/828–276/889), a sympathizer with the adherents of ḥadīth, contrasts the *ahl al-kalām* with the arithmeticians, geometers and engineers, whose procedures always yield a single answer to a given problem, and with physicians, who, inculcated with the knowledge of the ancients, always make the same diagnosis on the basis of a particular pulse rate or urine sample. The *ahl al-kalām*, he asserts, are divided into innumerable groups, each of which disagrees with all of the others. This problem is innate

because to differ is inherent in the minds, wills, and preferences of human beings. You almost never see two people in agreement so that each of them chooses what the other chooses and rejects what the other rejects, except in the case of the reliance of the one upon the other (*taqlīd*).⁸

In the minds of the adherents of ḥadīth, submission to the authority of the Prophet as embodied in the ḥadīth provided the only escape from this variance and contradiction.

The *ahl al-raʾy* and *ahl al-kalām* found themselves extremely vulnerable to the attacks of the adherents of ḥadīth. They could not reject the authority of the ḥadīth of the Prophet outright, if for no other reason than that these reports had long held a place in their own doctrines. The problem for them was to keep their own ḥadīth while rejecting those that contradicted their doctrines. The stance they did adopt was one of skepticism in the authentication of ḥadīth. In other words, they represented themselves as not rejecting the words of the Prophet, but rather doubting whether most ḥadīth in fact accurately represented his words. On the one hand, they refused to accept any ḥadīth that was not *mutawātir*, that is transmitted in

⁸ Ibn Qutayba, *Taʾwīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*, ed. Muḥammad Zuhūrī al-Najjār (Cairo, 1386/1966), 15; trans. Gérard Lecomte, *Le Traité des divergences du ḥadīth d'Ibn Qutayba* (Damascus, 1962), 16–17. Al-Jāḥiẓ takes on the objection of the arithmeticians and engineers that *kalām* is not “Science” in his treatise “*Fī ṣināʿat al-kalām*” in *Rasāʾil al-Jāḥiẓ*, ed. ʿAbd al-Salām Muḥammad Hārūn, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1384/1964–1399/1979), 4:238–39. Al-Qāḍī ʿAbd al-Jabbār reports that the opponents of *kalām* ask, “How can it be true that [the practitioners of *kalām*] regard it as a Science?” *Faḍl al-ʿitizāl wa-ṭabaqāt al-Muʿtazila wa-mubāyanatuhum li-sāʾir al-mukhālifīn*, in Fuʾād Sayyid, *Faḍl al-ʿitizāl wa-ṭabaqāt al-Muʿtazila* (Tunis, 1393/1974), 181.

each era after the Prophet by a number of transmitters so large as to exclude the possibility of a conspiracy. On the other hand, the Kūfans also rejected those ḥadīth which did not meet various internal criteria they stipulated. Throughout the third/ninth and fourth/tenth centuries, we find the Kūfans fighting a rearguard action against the thesis of the adherents of ḥadīth while simultaneously trying to accommodate it into their own teachings.⁹

II. *Ḥadīth Commentary and Criticism*

The personality most closely associated with the doctrine of the Kūfans was Abū Ḥanīfa (ca. 80/699–ca. 150/767) and he became the main target of Hījāzian attacks. The thesis of the adherents of ḥadīth is succinctly articulated in a report from Ḥafṣ b. Ghiyāth (d. 194/809): “I used to study with Abū Ḥanīfa. One day I heard him give five different answers to a single question. So I got up and left him and studied ḥadīth.”¹⁰ Their assertion that the reliance on ḥadīth always led to a single answer was largely wishful thinking, for at an early date they found themselves victims of their own success. As exclusive reference to the ḥadīth of the Prophet grew more common, the number of opinions ascribed to him increased until, in many cases, several points of view on a given question found expression in ḥadīth. The growth in the number of ḥadīth posed both theoretical and practical problems for them. On the theoretical side, the great promise of ḥadīth was uniformity. This benefit was contingent on the ability of scholars to extract a single answer for each question from the corpus of ḥadīth. Their failure to do so would provide ammunition for those who argued against using them. From the practical standpoint, the scholar already convinced of the authority of ḥadīth faced the problem of determining which of those addressing a given issue was authentic.

The adherents of ḥadīth took two different approaches to this dilemma. Some ventured to thread their way through the contradictory ḥadīth by rational means. The first major exponent of this

⁹ See Josef van Ess, “L’Autorité de la tradition prophétique dans la théologie mu‘tazilite,” *La Notion d’autorité au Moyen Age: Islam, Byzance, Occident*, ed. G. Makdisi et al. (Paris, 1982), 211–26 and Schacht, *Origins*, 50–52.

¹⁰ Fasawī, *Kitāb al-Ma‘rifā wa-l-ta’rīkh*, ed. Akram Diyā’ al-‘Umarī, 2d ed., 3 vols. (Beirut, 1401/1981), 2:789.

approach was the famous jurist Shāfi'ī (150/767–204/820)¹¹ and in later centuries this approach continued to be most frequently associated with the adherents to his legal doctrines.¹² It is found in Shāfi'ī's own *Ikhtilāf al-ḥadīth* and *Risāla*, *Kitāb al-Amr wa-'l-nahy* of his disciple Muzanī (175/792–264/877), *Ta'wīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth* of Ibn Qutayba, *Tahdhīb al-āthār* of Ṭabarī (224/839–310/923), and *Nāsikh al-ḥadīth wa-mansūkhuhū* of Ibn Shāhīn (297/909–385/995).¹³ Those who chose this route were often handcuffed by an overriding desire to defend the authenticity of the greatest number of ḥadīth. Therefore, their energies were largely expended in harmonization.¹⁴ Shāfi'ī put forth the guiding principle of this movement in his *Ikhtilāf al-ḥadīth*: "If it is possible that two [apparently contradictory] ḥadīth be used together, they should be used together."¹⁵ To resolve apparent contradictions, Shāfi'ī generally postulates one of three basic conditions:

1. There exists a certain amount of latitude on the issue and the various ḥadīth define its permissible boundaries.
2. One of the ḥadīth applies in one particular circumstance and the other(s) elsewhere.
3. One of the ḥadīth abrogated the other(s).¹⁶

¹¹ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:484–90.

¹² Shāfi'ī's interest in legal uniformity is discussed by Schacht in *Origins*, 13 and John Wansbrough in *The Sectarian Milieu: Content and Composition of Islamic Salvation History* (Oxford, 1978), 86.

¹³ Shāfi'ī, *Ikhtilāf al-ḥadīth*, ed. 'Āmir Aḥmad Ḥaydar (Beirut, 1405/1985); id., *al-Risāla*, ed. Aḥmad Shākir (Cairo, 1358/1940); trans. Majid Khadduri, *Islamic Jurisprudence: Shāfi'ī's "Risāla"* (Baltimore, 1961); Robert Brunschvig, "Le Livre de l'ordre et la défense' d'al-Muzanī," *Bulletin d'études orientales* 11 (1945–46):145–96; Ṭabarī, *Tahdhīb al-āthār*, ed. Maḥmūd Muḥammad Shākir, 5 vols. (Cairo, 1982); id. *Tahdhīb al-āthār: al-juz' al-mafqūd*, ed. 'Alī Riḍā b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Alī Riḍā (Damascus, 1416/1995); Ibn Shāhīn, *Nāsikh al-ḥadīth wa-mansūkhuhū*, ed. Samīr b. Amīn al-Zuhrī (al-Zarqā', 1408/1988). For a study on Muzanī's work, see Norman Calder, *Studies in early Muslim Jurisprudence* (Oxford, 1993), 86–104.

¹⁴ For Shāfi'ī and Ibn Qutayba as harmonizers, see Ignaz Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, 2:83–85; trans. C.R. Barber and S.M. Stern, *Muslim Studies*, 2 vols. (London, 1968–69), 2:85–87.

¹⁵ Shāfi'ī, *Ikhtilāf al-ḥadīth*, 64. Ḥanafite ḥadīth commentary was informed by an entirely different spirit, see Bayhaqī, *Ma'rifat al-sunan wa-'l-āthār*, ed. al-Sayyid Aḥmad Ṣaqr (Cairo, 1969), 1:147–48; Schacht, *Origins*, 30. Cf. 'Alī al-Qārī, *Manāqib al-imām al-a'zam* in 'Abd al-Qādir al-Qurashī, *al-Jawāhir al-muḍīya fī ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanafīya*, 2 vols. (Hyderabad, 1332), 2:431–33.

¹⁶ Cf. J. Schacht, *Origins*, 13–14; Gérard Lecomte, "Un Exemple d'évolution de la controverse en Islam: de l'*Ikhtilāf al-ḥadīth* d'al-Šāfi'ī au *Muhtalif al-ḥadīth* d'Ibn Qutayba," *Studia Islamica* 27 (1967):5–40.

It will be noticed that in each of the three cases the authenticity of all of the ḥadīth is maintained. Even when abrogation is postulated, the authenticity of the ḥadīth is not challenged, although the ruling it contains is no longer held to be valid.

Other members of the movement of the *ahl al-ḥadīth* acknowledged that the contradiction between various ḥadīth was real and attempted to distinguish which of the ḥadīth on a given issue were right and which were wrong by examining their authenticity. They scrutinized the history of the transmission of the ḥadīth from one scholar to another down through time. By the beginning of the third/ninth century it had already become customary to attach to each ḥadīth the record of its transmission, known as the "isnād," and it was to this that these scholars directed their attention. Their procedures for examining isnāds will be described in detail in Chapter VI.¹⁷

The difference between the two approaches was the difference between commentary and criticism. The ḥadīth commentator, like the Qur'ān commentator, treated the canon as if it were closed and attempted to work within its bounds. The critic of ḥadīth manipulated the boundaries of the canon to avoid contradiction, removing any objectionable material. It is likely that the differences between these methods stem from their emergence in different environments. The commentator was bent on establishing the authority of ḥadīth at all costs, something that the critic took for granted. While trying to resolve the vexatious contradictions, the commentator was simultaneously forced to avoid offering an opening to his Kūfan rivals who were eager for any pretext to reject a ḥadīth in conflict with their own dogmas. As might be expected, ḥadīth commentary, torn between its two virtually exclusive objectives, was usually labored and often utterly unconvincing.¹⁸ These separate approaches may not have been wholly inimical, but there were few scholars who made significant contributions in both domains before the fourth/tenth century.¹⁹

¹⁷ It should be understood that only Sunnite ḥadīth criticism is being discussed here. For Shī'ite ḥadīth criticism, see Etan Kohlberg, "An unusual Shī'ī isnād," *Israel Oriental Studies* 5 (1975):142-49; id., "Shī'ī Ḥadīth," *Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Arabic Literature to the End of the Umayyad Period*, 299-307; id., "Al-Uṣūl al-Arba'umī'a," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 10 (1987), 128-66; Heinz Halm, *Shiism* (Edinburgh, 1991), 40-46.

¹⁸ See the comments of Goldziher and Schacht on Ibn Qutayba's *Ta'wīl mukhtalif al-ḥadīth*; *Muhammedanische Studien*, 2:136-37; trans. *Muslim Studies*, 2:130-31; *Origins*, 257.

¹⁹ For a discussion of the rather perfunctory manner the early critics treated

Ibn Abī Ḥātim was a critic of ḥadīth. As a group, the critics, like all of the other contemporary schools of thought, were informally and loosely constituted. They were characterized in the first place by their insistence on the exclusive reliance on the Qur'ān and ḥadīth as sources for religious doctrine and they also shared a more or less uniform body of legal and theological teachings. The critics correspond, to a large extent, to those early scholars whom the Arabic historians would later identify as "Ḥanbalites." Although Ibn Abī Ḥātim does not appear to have been familiar with the use of the word "Ḥanbalite" in this sense (or with any of the other names later applied to the schools of law), he certainly recognized Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (164/780–241/855)²⁰ as a forebear who had shared most of his own aims, methods and beliefs.

The critics of ḥadīth held an extreme position in the debate over reason. Their ardor for expelling human reason from the formation of doctrine is epitomized in two phrases which acquired something near the status of slogans among them, "*lā adrī*" (I do not know) and "*bi-lā kayf*" (Without [asking] how). The phrase "*lā adrī*" was to be the response to any legal question not expressly covered by the Qur'ān and ḥadīth. The critic was not to compromise his principles by resorting to *ra'y* even if his failure to give an answer to the question brought disappointment.²¹ "*Bi-lā kayf*" represented the desired stance to be taken on theological dogmas. If the Qur'ān or ḥadīth said that something was so, it was so. It had to be accepted without question and it was felt that speculation on the subject beyond the textual indications would only lead to divisiveness.²²

ḥadīth commentary, see Nūr al-Dīn 'Itr, *al-Imām al-Tirmidhī wa-'l-muwāzana bayn ḥadīth wa-bayn al-Ṣaḥīḥayn* ([Cairo], 1390/1970), 223–29.

²⁰ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:502–9.

²¹ For a number of reports praising "*lā adrī*" in this context, see Ibn Abī Ya'ālā, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ḥanābila*, ed. Muḥammad Ḥamīd al-Fiqī, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1371/1952), 1:71. Cf. Gustave E. von Grunebaum, "On the Development of the Type of Scholar in Early Islam," *Corona: Studies in Celebration of the Eightieth Birthday of Samuel Singer*, ed. Arno Schirokauer and Wolfgang Paulson (Durham, 1941), 142–147; Franz Rosenthal, *The Technique and Approach of Muslim Scholarship* (Rome, 1947), 62–63; id., *Knowledge Triumphant: The Concept of Knowledge in Medieval Islam* (Leiden, 1970), 308–14.

²² For "*bi-lā kayf*," see I. Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law*, trans. Andras and Ruth Hamori (Princeton, 1981), 92; J. Schacht "Theology and Law in Islam," *Theology and Law in Islam*, ed. G.E. von Grunebaum (Wiesbaden, 1971), 11–12. Schacht notes that the phrase does not occur in the works of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. However, it is already ascribed to the "Nābita" by al-Jāḥiẓ in his *Risāla fi 'l-Nābita* (composed around 225/839); *Rasā'il al-Jāḥiẓ*, 2:18.

Hadīth criticism was the practical embodiment of the philosophy of the critics. Their desire to avoid the arbitrariness inherent in the exercise of human reason led them to seek an objective method for authenticating ḥadīth which would, as a consequence of its objectivity, yield completely consistent results. On two occasions in the *Taqdima*, Ibn Abī Ḥātim asserts that, using ḥadīth criticism, scholars working independently are able to reach the same conclusion without collusion.²³ This proved a persuasive argument for the efficacy of ḥadīth criticism. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī (d. 198/813) said, “To the ignorant, our rejection of ḥadīth appears to be soothsaying (*kahāna*).”²⁴ The ignorant in question were most often the *ahl al-ra’y* and *ahl al-kalām* who, having no use for ḥadīth criticism, failed to study it. This is the subject of the report which Ibn Abī Ḥātim chose to lead off the chapter on his father, Abū Ḥātim, in the *Taqdima*.

A prominent and intelligent adherent of *ra’y* came to me [i.e. Abū Ḥātim] with a notebook [of ḥadīth] and submitted it to me for examination. I said about one of [the ḥadīth]; “This is an erroneous (*khata’a*) ḥadīth into which its transmitter interpolated another ḥadīth.” I said in regard to another, “This is a spurious (*bāṭil*) ḥadīth.” I said about another, “This is a rejected (*munkar*) ḥadīth.” I said about another, “This is a false (*kadhib*) ḥadīth. The rest of them are sound ḥadīth.” He said to me, “How do you know that this one is erroneous, that one is spurious and the other is false? Did the transmitter of this book tell you that I erred or lied in such-and-such ḥadīth?” I said, “No, I do not know who the transmitter of this volume is. However, I do know that this is erroneous and that is spurious and the other is false.” He said, “Do you pretend to have supernatural power?” I said, “This is not pretense to any supernatural power.” He said, “What is the proof for what you say?” I said, “Ask someone who is as proficient as me about what I said. If we agree, you know that we were not speaking randomly: we spoke only with understanding.” He said, “Who is someone who is as proficient as you?” I said, “Abū Zur’a.” He said, “Abū Zur’a will say what you said?” I said yes. [The adherent of *ra’y*] said, “This is strange.” He took [his volume] and wrote my remarks about these ḥadīth on a sheet of paper. Then he returned to me and he had written down the remarks of Abū Zur’a about the ḥadīth. What I had called “spurious” Abū Zur’a called “false.” I said, “‘False’ and ‘spurious’ are the same.” What I had called “false” Abū Zur’a called “spurious.” What I had called “rejected” he called “rejected.”

²³ *Taqdima*, 350, 358.

²⁴ Ibn Abī Ḥātim, *ʿIlal al-ḥadīth*, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1343–44), 1:10.

just as I had. What I had called "sound" Abū Zur'a called "sound." [The adherent of *ra'y*] said, "How odd! Both of you are in agreement without there being any collusion between you." I said, "That shows you that we were not speaking at random. We spoke only from the knowledge and experience that were granted to us."²⁵

Thus, we find that the charges of those who attacked ḥadīth criticism often centered on the assertion that it was essentially arbitrary in its operation. For instance, the Mu'tazilite Abū 'l-Qāsim al-Balkhī (d. 319/931) devotes one section of his *Qabūl al-akhbār wa-ma'rifat al-rijāl*²⁶ to dredging up negative reports regarding most of the important scholars of ḥadīth in an attempt to show that no such person as a completely reliable transmitter existed. In this way, he hoped to demonstrate that the preferences of the critics for one transmitter over another were unjustified. This had earlier been attempted by Ḥusayn al-Karābīsī (d. 245/859) in his *Kitāb al-Mudallisīn* (or *al-Tadlīs*), which Balkhī and other opponents of the critics used extensively.²⁷ Similar issues are addressed by the critics in their own works, presumably in response to the arguments of their rivals. Ibn Abī Ḥātim's *Taqdima* was also an attempt to defend ḥadīth criticism, although on historical rather than on rational grounds.

²⁵ *Taqdima*, 349–51; al-Ḥākim al-Nisābūrī, *Ma'rifat 'ulūm al-ḥadīth*, ed. al-Sayyid Mu'azzam Ḥusayn (Cairo, 1937), 112; Dhahabī, *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'*, ed. Shu'ayb al-Arna'ūt, 25 vols. (Beirut, 1401/1981–1409/1988), 13:253–54. This report recalls a similar incident in the life of 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī; see Rāmahurmuzī, *al-Muḥaddith al-fāṣil bayn al-rawī wa-'l-wā'iz*, ed. Muḥammad 'Ajjāj al-Khaṭīb (Beirut, 1391/1971), 312; Ibn 'Adī, *al-Kāmil fī du'afā' al-rijāl*, 7 vols. (Beirut, 1404/1984), 1:118.

²⁶ Cairo, Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya, muṣṭalaḥ 14m; see Fu'ād Sayyid, *Fihrist al-makhtūṭāt: muṣṭalaḥ al-ḥadīth* (Cairo, 1375/1956), 273. It seems that this work is identical to the one ascribed to Balkhī under the title *Naqd al-Sīrijānī*, see Rāmahurmuzī, *al-Muḥaddith al-fāṣil*, 309, n. 3.

²⁷ Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ 'Ilal al-Tirmidhī*, ed. Ṣubḥī Jāsim al-Ḥamīd (Baghdad, n.d.), 534–36.

CHAPTER TWO

IBN ABĪ ḤĀTIM AL-RĀZĪ: LIFE AND WORKS

In many respects Ibn Abī Ḥātim's career was typical for a scholar of ḥadīth of his era. As a boy he studied with the transmitters in his hometown of al-Rayy and when he grew older he travelled to the chief intellectual centers of the Islamic world to collect ḥadīth. After his journeys he returned home to teach and write. Although he encountered many of the conflicting intellectual and religious currents of his day while abroad, his career appears to have been most profoundly shaped by the competition between the critics and their opponents in al-Rayy. It was in response to the attacks against ḥadīth criticism that he wrote the *Taqdīm*.

I. Sources

Little is known about Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī. Although he is a famous figure in the history of Muslim scholarship and is mentioned in many works, the sources do not permit an entirely satisfactory reconstruction of his life. At present the researcher must rely heavily on the classical biographical dictionaries.¹ These treatments assumed

¹ Abū Ya'la al-Khalīlī, *Kitāb al-Irshād fī 'ulamā' al-ḥadīth*, ed. Muḥammad Sa'īd b. 'Umar Idrīs, 3 vols. (Riyadh, 1409/1989), 2:683–84; 'Abbādī, *Kitāb Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahā' al-Shāfi'īya*, ed. Gösta Vitestam (Leiden, 1964), 29–30; Ibn Abī Ya'la, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:55; Sam'ānī, *al-Ansāb*, ed. 'Abd Allāh 'Umar al-Bārūdī, 5 vols. (Beirut, 1408/1988), 2:280; Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rikh madīnat Dimashq*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid et al. (Damascus, 1951ff.), 41:336–44; Yāqūt, *Mu'jam al-buldān*, ed. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld, 6 vols. (Leipzig, 1866–73), 2:898–99; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ al-Shahrazūrī, *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahā' al-Shāfi'īya*, ed. Muḥyī al-Dīn 'Alī Najīb, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1413/1992), 1:534; Dhahabī, *Kitāb Duwal al-Islām*, 2d ed., 2 vols. (Hyderabad, 1364–65), 1:147; id., *al-'Ibar fī khabar man ghabar*, ed. Ṣalāḥ al-Dīn al-Munajjid and Fu'ād Sayyid, 5 vols. (Kuwait, 1960–66), 2:208; id., *Mizān al-ʿitidāl fī naqd al-rijāl*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad al-Bajawī, 4 vols. (Cairo, 1382/1963), 2:587–88; id., *Siyar*, 13:263–69; id., *Tadhkirat al-huffāẓ*, 4 vols. (Hyderabad, 1955–58), 3:829–32; id., *Ta'rikh al-Islām wa-wafayāt al-mashāhīr wa-'l-a'lam*, ed. 'Umar 'Abd al-Salām Tadmūrī (Beirut, 1409/1989ff.), 24:206–9; Ṣafadī, *al-Wāfi bi-'l-wafayāt*, ed. Hellmut Ritter et al. (Istanbul/Wiesbaden, 1931ff.), 18:228–29; Kutubī, *Fawāt al-wafayāt*, ed. Iḥsān 'Abbās, 5 vols. (Beirut, 1973–74), 2:287–88; Yāfi'ī, *Mir'āt al-janān wa-ʿibrat al-yaqẓān fī ma'rifat mā yu'tabaru min ḥawādith al-zamān*, 4 vols. (Hyderabad, 1337–39), 2:289; Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īya*

a standard form at a fairly early date and vary primarily in their length. Although he is claimed by both the Shāfi'ites and Ḥanbalites, their representations of him differ only slightly in emphasis. For later generations of Muslims, he was a uncontroversial figure, revered for his contributions to the ḥadīth, a discipline which lost much of its sectarian character with the passage of time.

The information in the biographical dictionaries derives from three basic sources. The first is what Ibn Abī Ḥātim himself wrote. Because all of his books are collections of transmitted material with isnāds, it is possible to trace the source of nearly every word in them. This, however, proves less useful than may be expected, for he rarely supplies information regarding where and when he received his reports. (The exception to this pattern is *Ādāb al-Shāfi'ī wa-manāqibuhū*,² where in many instances his isnāds do record where he studied with his informants.) Thus the authors of the biographical dictionaries are able list his teachers, but are usually unable to provide more than a few circumstantial details concerning his relations with them. It

al-kubrā, ed. 'Abd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥilw and Maḥmūd Muḥammad al-Ṭanāḥī, 10 vols. (Cairo, 1383/1963–[1396]/1976), 3:324–28; Asnawī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īya*, ed. 'Abd Allāh al-Jubūrī, 2 vols. (Baghdad, 1970–71), 1:416–17; Ibn Kathīr, *al-Bidāya wa-l-nihāya*, 14 vols. (Cairo, 1351–58), 11:191; id., *Ṭabaqāt al-fuqahā' al-Shāfi'īya*, ed. Aḥmad 'Umar Hāshim and Muḥammad Zaynhum Muḥammad Gharab, 3 vols. (Cairo, 1413/1993), 1:254–55; Ibn Qāḍī Shuhbā, *Ṭabaqāt al-Shāfi'īya*, ed. 'Abd al-'Alīm Khān, 2 vols. represented as 4 vols. (Beirut, 1407/1987), 1:112; Ibn Ḥajar al-'Asqalānī, *Lisān al-mīzān*, 6 vols. (Hyderabad, 1329–31), 3:432–33; Ibn Taghrī Birdī, *al-Nujūm al-zāhira fī mulūk Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira*, 16 vols. (Cairo, 1348/1929–1392/1972), 3:264–65; Ibn Muḥḥab, *al-Maqṣid al-arṣad fī dhikr aṣḥāb al-imām Aḥmad*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Sulaymān al-'Uthaymīn, 3 vols. (Riyadh [i.e. Cairo], 1410/1990), 2:107–9; Suyūṭī, *Ṭabaqāt al-ḥuffāz*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad 'Umar (Cairo, 1393/1973), 345–46; id., *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīn*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad 'Umar (Cairo, 1396/1976), 62–64; 'Ulaymī, *al-Minhaj al-aḥmad fī tarājim aṣḥāb al-imām Aḥmad*, ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd, 2 vols. (All published? Cairo, 1383/1963), 2:17–18; Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt al-mufasssīn*, ed. 'Alī Muḥammad 'Umar, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1392/1972), 1:279–81; Ibn al-'Imād, *Shadharāt al-dhahab fī akhbār man dhahab*, 8 vols. (Cairo, 1350–51), 2:308–9; 'Umar Riḍā' Kaḥḥāla, *Mu'jam al-mu'allifin: tarājim muṣannaḥī al-kutub al-'Arabīya*, 15 vols. (Damascus, 1957–61), 5: 170–71; Khayr al-Dīn al-Ziriklī, *al-'Alām*, 10th ed., 8 vols. (Beirut, 1992), 3:324; Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:178–79; Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert Hidschra*, 6 vols. (Berlin, 1991–95), 2:636–37. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī is said to have provided a detailed entry on Ibn Abī Ḥātim in *Ta'riḫ Baghdad* (i.e. *tarjamatuhū mustawfātun fī Ta'riḫ al-Khaṭīb*; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 3:433), but no entry for him is found in the published edition of the text. I might also mention that after completing my dissertation I had the opportunity to examine briefly the 1972 Masters Thesis of Rif'at Fawzī 'Abd al-Muṭṭalib, entitled *'Abd al-Raḥmān ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī*, for the University of Cairo (Kulliyat Dār al-'ulūm, Qism al-Sharī'a al-Islāmīya).

² Ed. 'Abd al-Ghanī 'Abd al-Khāliq (Cairo, 1372/1953).

might be expected that Ibn Abī Ḥātim's own great work of personality criticism, *Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa-'l-ta'dīl*,³ would flesh out the picture, yet this is not actually the case. He does devote entries to some of the scholars he met, but not to all of them. Furthermore, he has a tendency to be very brief in his description of his dealings with them, usually limiting himself to "I wrote ḥadīth from him in . . .," rarely even giving the date of the meeting.

We are fortunate that one of Ibn Abī Ḥātim's students was sufficiently inspired to write about him. The biography (*tarjama*)—a *muṣannaf*, or "collection of reports"—by Abu 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm al-Rāzī al-Khaṭīb served as the fundamental source of information about Ibn Abī Ḥātim for later writers. The work itself has not survived, but about fifteen reports from it are quoted in later accounts of his life. This material consists of stories recorded from the lips of Ibn Abī Ḥātim, descriptions of events 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm witnessed and reports he collected from others. Little is known about this author: he is described as a resident of Mecca and incidental remarks indicate that he was a student of Ibn Abī Ḥātim and attended his funeral in al-Rayy.

The last major source for the life of Ibn Abī Ḥātim is *al-Irshād fī ma'rifat 'ulamā' al-ḥadīth* (2:683–84) of Abū Ya'la al-Khalīlī (367/977–446/1054). The author of this geographically-arranged biographical dictionary was an admirer of Ibn Abī Ḥātim, rating him as one of the four great *imāms* of the age.⁴ The entry on Ibn Abī Ḥātim is actually quite brief and consists of two parts. The first is a synopsis of his career and the second is a passage explaining the reason he died childless. The work of Abū Ya'la al-Khalīlī is less valuable than that of 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm, yet does provide a important list of Ibn Abī Ḥātim's works, mentioning some unknown to later scholars.

II. *Al-Rayy*

Both Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his father spent the better part of their life in al-Rayy, an ancient city near the site of present-day Tehran. The political history of the city in the late third/ninth century seems

³ Ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Yaḥyā al-Mu'allimī al-Yamānī, 4 vols. in 8 parts (Hyderabad, 1371/1952–1473/1953).

⁴ Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 14:502.

to have been one of almost continuous turmoil, with one ruler following another in dizzying succession. More relevant to the career of Ibn Abī Ḥātim was the tension between the religious factions which provided a constant backdrop for the political upheavals. The Arabic historians employed the term “*‘aṣabīyāt*” to refer to this kind of tension and the violent civil disturbances it often caused. These factional rivalries were characteristic of the eastern lands of the Islamic world, with the constitution of the competing groups varying from city to city.⁵ The tensions in al-Rayy are some of the earliest ones for which we have documentation and they persisted unabated until the city’s destruction by the Mongols in the seventh/thirteenth century.

Our knowledge of the religious tensions in al-Rayy in the time of Ibn Abī Ḥātim is somewhat imprecise, but the outline is clear: the Hijāzians were in competition with the Kūfans and the Kūfans had the upper hand. Our main source for this information is the *Taqdima*, which makes only oblique references to the conflict itself. Most of these concern Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s teacher Abū Zur’a, a scion of a well-to-do family who began his career as one of the *ahl al-ra’y*, apparently attaining a certain stature among them, but later gave his allegiance to the *ahl al-ḥadīth*. Abū Zur’a says, “God blessed us and we came to learn the error of the masses (*al-qawm*).”⁶ It appears that Abū Zur’a’s conversion took place while he was on a journey and he kept it secret for some time after his return to al-Rayy.⁷ The reports in the *Taqdima* are primarily devoted to enumerating the risks Abū Zur’a ran by his abandonment of his former beliefs, including the threat of exile, imprisonment and beating, and are found in the section entitled “The Beginning of Abū Zur’a’s display of opposition

⁵ These factional tensions are discussed in the following works: Claude Cahen, “Mouvements populaires et autonomisme urbain dans l’Asie musulmane du moyen âge,” *Arabica* 5 (1958):225–50, 6 (1959): 25–56, 231–65 (later reprinted as a separate volume under the same title, Leiden, 1959); Clifford E. Bosworth, *The Ghaznavids: Their Empire in Afghanistan and Eastern Iran 944–1040* (Edinburgh, 1963), 163–202; Richard W. Bulliet, *The Patricians of Nishapur* (Cambridge, 1972), 28–46; Wilferd Madelung, *Religious Trends in Early Islamic Iran* (Albany, 1988), 26–38. The most complete discussions of the religious situation of al-Rayy are found in Ḥusayn Karīmān, *Ray-i bāstān*, 2 vols. (Tehran, 1345–49S), 2:42–89 and Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, 2:632–38.

⁶ Bardha’ī, *Kūtab al-Du‘afā’ wa-l-kadhdhābīn wa-l-matrūkīn min aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*, in Sa’dī al-Hāshimī’s *Abū Zur’a wa-juhūdūhū fī l-sunna al-nabawīya*, 2d ed., 3 vols. (al-Manṣūra, 1409/1989), 2:755.

⁷ I infer this from the report concerning the letter of Ishāq b. Rāhawayh to Abū Zur’a; *Taqdima*, 342.

to the *ahl al-ra'y*, his preaching the tenets of the *sunna* and his exposing himself to injury from the masses."⁸

It is specifically mentioned that Abū Zur'a's teaching brought him into conflict with Muḥammad b. Muqātil al-Rāzī (d. 248/862),⁹ who, we are informed by a passage preserved from Ibn Bābawayh's now-lost history of al-Rayy,¹⁰ was the head of the local *ahl al-ra'y* and prominent in *fiqh*. As the *qāḍī* of al-Rayy and a student of the great Ḥanafite scholar Shaybānī, he suffered from a bad reputation in ḥadīth circles. When a student asked Bukhārī (194/810–256/870)¹¹ whether the Muḥammad b. Muqātil he was transmitting from was the one in al-Rayy, he declared that he would prefer falling "from the sky to the ground" to transmitting from Muḥammad b. Muqātil al-Rāzī.¹²

Later sources confirm the impression of the sectarian conflict given in the *Taqdima*, although it may be questioned whether the conditions they describe are applicable in detail to the time of Ibn Abī Ḥātim. The great traveller Maqdisī (d. ca. 380/990), who visited al-Rayy in the time of the Buyid vizier al-Ṣāḥib b. 'Abbād (d. 385/995), found two separate groups of Ḥanafites in al-Rayy.¹³ The city proper was dominated by Najjārites while Za'farānites controlled the countryside. The principal difference between these sects, Maqdisī informs us, was that the Najjārites regarded the Qur'ān as created while the Za'farānites suspended judgement on the question. He also mentions that there were many Ḥanbalites—who in theology correspond to the critics of ḥadīth—and that they formed a strong party

⁸ *Taqdima*, 347.

⁹ *Taqdima*, 347–48.

¹⁰ Ibn Hajar, *Lisān*, 5:388. An account of the *Ta'rikh al-Rayy* of the famous Shī'ite scholar Abu 'l-Ḥasan 'Alī b. 'Ubayd Allāh b. Bābawayh (d. ca. 600/1203), with a list of passages from it quoted in surviving books, is found in 'Abd al-'Azīz al-Ṭabāṭabā'ī's introduction to his *Fihrist asmā' 'ulamā' al-Shī'a wa-muṣannifihim* (Beirut, 1406/1986), 45–46. It might also be mentioned that Yāqūt cites a *Ta'rikh al-Rayy* attributed to Buyid vizier Abū Sa'd Maṣṣūr b. al-Ḥusayn al-Ābī (d. 421/1030) in *Buldān*, e.g., 1:57, 4:431. Sakhāwī mentions both of these works in his *al-Flān bi-l-tawbīkh li-man dhamma [ahl] al-ta'rikh*, ed. Franz Rosenthal (Baghdad, 1382/1963), 264; trans. F. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 2d ed. (Leiden, 1968), 469.

¹¹ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:115–34.

¹² Abū Ya'fā al-Khalīlī, *Irshād*, 3:905; Ibn Hajar, *Lisān*, 5:388. The other Muḥammad b. Muqātil was the Baghdādī scholar of ḥadīth Muḥammad b. Muqātil al-Marwazī (d. 226/840).

¹³ Maqdisī, *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm* (*Bibliotheca Geographorum Arabicorum*, vol. 3), ed. M.J. de Goeje, 2d ed. (Leiden, 1906), 390–96.

in the city. He writes that the disagreements between the groups over the creation of the Qur'ān sometimes led to civil disturbances (*‘aṣabīyāt*). Abū Dulaf (d. ca. 350/961), who visited al-Rayy before 333/944, remarks on the predilection for violence and bloodshed among the populace in what is most likely a reference to this unrest.¹⁴ By the time of Maqdisī's visit, some attempt at a compromise had been made because the Shāfi'ites and Ḥanafites, i.e. the Ḥijāzians and Kūfans, alternated daily in the honor of leading the prayers in the city's main congregational mosque.

III. Birth and Early Education

Abū Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī was born in al-Rayy in 240/854. The roots of his family ultimately reached back to the village of Jazz near Isfahan.¹⁵ Although the date of the family's migration from Jazz to al-Rayy is unknown, relatives from Jazz still used to visit the family in al-Rayy during the lifetime of Ibn Abī Ḥātim's grandfather.¹⁶ In addition to "Rāzī," Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his father are given the *nisba* "Ḥanzalī." Two explanations for its origin were proposed. The first derives the *nisba* from a place name, "the *darb* Ḥanzala" in al-Rayy, where, it is said, the family lived and Abū Ḥātim's mosque was located. However, according to ‘Alī b. Ibrāhīm, Ibn Abī Ḥātim claimed that his relatives were clients of the tribe of Tamīm b. Ḥanzala b. Ghaṭafān. "Tamīmī" and "Ghaṭafānī" are also sometimes given as *nisbas* of both Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his father.¹⁷

Abū Ḥātim, in a gesture intended, no doubt, to signify his views on the relative priority of the sources of doctrine, forbade his young son to take up ḥadīth before he had completed the study of the

¹⁴ Abū Dulaf, *Abū Dulaf Miṣfar b. Muḥallil's Travels in Iran*, ed. and trans. Vladimir Minorsky (Cairo, 1955), 21 (Arabic), 51 (English).

¹⁵ Abū Nu‘aym, *Kitāb Dhikr akhbār Ishbahān*, ed. Sven Dederling, 2 vols. (Leiden, 1931–34), 2:201; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta’rīkh Baghdād*, 14 vols. (Cairo, 1349/1931), 2:74; Sam‘ānī, *Ansāb*, 2:58. For Jazz, see Ibn al-Athīr, *al-Lubāb fī tahdhīb al-ansāb*, 3 vols. (Beirut, n.d.), 1:278; G. Le Strange, *The Lands of the Eastern Caliphate* (Cambridge, 1905), 206. Dhahabī (*Siyar*, 13:250) gives the name of the village as Jurwakān, which the editor identifies with Jurwa‘ān, a quarter in Isfahan.

¹⁶ Abū Nu‘aym, *Akhbār Ishbahān*, 2:201; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2:74.

¹⁷ The fullest discussions of this matter are in Yāqūt, *Buldān*, 2:348–49 and Sam‘ānī, *Ansāb*, 2:279. Dhahabī gives the name of the tribe as "Tamīm b. Ḥanzala b. Yarbū‘" in *Siyar*, 13:247.

Qur'ān. This Ibn Abī Ḥātim did under the tuition of al-Faḍl b. Shādhān al-Rāzī (also known as "al-Nīsābūrī," d. 260/873),¹⁸ an unusual figure, whom the theologian Abu 'l-Ḥasan al-Ash'arī (260/874–324/935) characterized as a Shī'ite transmitter of ḥadīth.¹⁹ An individual of high attainments, he wrote 180 works and was especially expert in the variant readings (*qirā'āt*) of the Qur'ān. Ibn al-Nadīm (d. ca. 400/1009) cites him as a source of information on the history of the Qur'ān in his *Fihrist*.²⁰ It is surprising to encounter so distinguished a figure teaching the Qur'ān to the youngsters of al-Rayy and perhaps this is the reason that Ibn Abī Ḥātim thought it worth mentioning. Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his father also took ḥadīth from him.²¹

Once his study of the Qur'ān had been completed, Ibn Abī Ḥātim began to collect ḥadīth from the transmitters living in al-Rayy and those foreign scholars who happened to visit the city. At this time al-Rayy was a center of ḥadīth scholarship. The renowned Ḥanafite expert in ḥadīth, Ṭahāwī (239/853–321/993), declared that the three greatest ḥadīth scholars of his time lived in al-Rayy, namely Abū Ḥātim, Abū Zur'a and Ibn Wāra.²² The most extensive treatment of the career of Abū Ḥātim Muḥammad b. Idrīs al-Rāzī (195/811–277/890)²³ is that dedicated to him by his son in the *Taqdima* (pp. 349–75). Abū Ḥātim was born in al-Rayy in 195/811 and took up the study ḥadīth at the age of fourteen. A year later he was already serving as a teaching assistant (*mustamlī*) for a local scholar. In 213/828 he left home to pursue his studies abroad and did not return for eight years, during which he performed the pilgrimage and visited every city of any importance for ḥadīth scholarship in Egypt, Iraq, Syria and the Hejaz. He claimed to have walked a thousand *farsakhs* (about 6,000 km.) before he stopped keeping count and the hardships he suffered in his quest for ḥadīth are proudly recounted in the *Taqdima*, forming some of the most stirring passages of the work. It is also in these passages that we catch a glimpse of the humor and humanity of a great scholar in a way rarely displayed in the early Arabic biographical literature.

¹⁸ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:537–38.

¹⁹ *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, ed. Hellmut Ritter, 2 vols. (Istanbul, 1929–30), 1:63.

²⁰ Ibn al-Nadīm, *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. Riḍā Tajaddud (n.p., n.d.), 29–30.

²¹ *Jarh*, 3(2):63.

²² Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb al-Tahdhīb*, 12 vols. (Hyderabad, 1325–27), 9:452.

²³ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:153.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim's other principal mentor was Abū Zur'a 'Ubayd Allāh b. 'Abd al-Karīm al-Rāzī (200/815–264/878).²⁴ Some of the sources tie him by blood to Ibn Abī Ḥātim; there is, however, disagreement over the exact nature of the relationship.²⁵ As has been mentioned above, Abū Zur'a began his career as one of the *ahl al-ra'y*, but later went over to the *ahl al-ḥadīth*. An outstanding scholar, he is said to have collected several hundred thousand ḥadīth in the course of his extensive travels which carried him to Iraq, Syria, Egypt and the holy cities of Arabia. In Egypt he copied the works of Shāfi'ī from al-Rabī' b. Sulaymān al-Murādī (d. 270/883),²⁶ the famous pupil of Shāfi'ī, with whom Ibn Abī Ḥātim later studied. Abū Zur'a was particularly proud of his close relationship with the great scholar Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, at whose home he stayed when visiting Baghdad. Later his health declined and in 264/878 he died, with a ḥadīth on his lips, from a combination of the plague and a gastric malady. His tomb in al-Rayy was still preserved three centuries after his death.

Muḥammad b. Muslim b. Wāra al-Rāzī, known as Ibn Wāra (d. 270/884),²⁷ was the third great scholar of ḥadīth living in al-Rayy during Ibn Abī Ḥātim's youth. In *Jarḥ* (4[1]:79–80), Ibn Abī Ḥātim says that he studied with Ibn Wāra, but he does not elaborate any further. Ibn Abī Ḥātim appears to have worked much less extensively with him than with Abū Ḥātim and Abū Zur'a. Ibn Wāra is also a more obscure figure. He was born in the last decade of the second/eighth century and he travelled extensively, studying ḥadīth with many scholars, including Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. He made at least two trips to Egypt, once to copy the Egyptian versions of the works of Shāfi'ī.²⁸

²⁴ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:145.

²⁵ Abū Bakr al-Khallāl (d. 311/923) claims that Abū Ḥātim was the maternal uncle (*khāl*) of Abū Zur'a; Ibn Abī Ya'lā, *Tabaqāt*, 1:199; Ibn al-Mībrad, *Muḥjam al-kutub*, ed. Yusrā 'Abd al-Ghanī al-Bishrī (Riyadh, 1989), 121. Dhahabī calls Abū Ḥātim a maternal cousin of Abū Zur'a (*ibn khālatihī*) in *Tadhkira*, 1:557. Sam'ānī makes Ibn Abī Ḥātim a nephew of Abū Zur'a (*ibn ukhtihī*) in *Ansāb*, 3:24.

²⁶ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:474.

²⁷ *Jarḥ*, 4(1):79–80; Abū Ya'lā al-Khalīlī, *Irshād*, 2:676–78; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'riḫ*, 3:256–60; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 13:28–32; id., *Tadhkira*, 1:575–77; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 9:451–53; Ibn Abī Ya'lā, *Tabaqāt*, 1:324; Ṣafadī, *Wāfi*, 5:27.

²⁸ *Ādāb al-Shāfi'ī*, 59–60.

The local scholars encouraged the visitors to al-Rayy to hold classes and Ibn Abī Ḥātim also took advantage of these. Foremost among the foreign scholars with whom Ibn Abī Ḥātim studied in al-Rayy was Muslim b. al-Ḥajjāj al-Nīsābūrī (202/817–261/875),²⁹ the author of the famous canonical ḥadīth collection *Ṣaḥīḥ*, the publication of which outraged the scholars of al-Rayy.³⁰

IV. *Travels*

As was customary for a ḥadīth scholar in the third/ninth century, Ibn Abī Ḥātim left his home to further his studies. His first journey was with his father in 255/868, when, in conjunction with the pilgrimage, they visited the ḥadīth centers of Iraq, Syria and the Hejaz. His second journey was in 262/875 to collect ḥadīth in Egypt and Syria and his third in 264/877 took him to Isfahan. He also performed the pilgrimage to Mecca in 260/873.³¹ At this time ḥadīth

²⁹ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:136–43.

³⁰ *Jarḥ*, 4(1):182–83. Abū Zur‘a considered Muslim’s undertaking to write such a work in the first place extremely presumptuous. He also made two specific charges against the work. 1) Not all of the transmitters cited were reliable. 2) Writing such a work would provide ammunition for the “*ahl al-bida’*.” It was feared that, whenever a ḥadīth not found in the work was cited against them, they would say, “This is not in the book of authentic ḥadīth!” and use that as a pretext for ignoring the ḥadīth. Defending himself against the first charge, Muslim stated that while it was true that some ḥadīth transmitted by unreliable transmitters were to be found in the book, these same ḥadīth were also known through reliable lines of transmission, but he had chosen the former for inclusion because they were shorter. In regard to the second charge, he explained that when he called his work “*Ṣaḥīḥ*” he did not mean to imply that only the ḥadīth included in it were authentic and all others were unauthentic. He had only meant that the ḥadīth that were included were authentic. Ibn Wāra also leveled the second charge against Muslim and refused to teach him any ḥadīth until he apologized: Muslim apologized; Bardha‘ī, *Ḍu‘afā’*, 2:674–77; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta‘rīkh*, 4:273–74; Ḥāzimī, *Shurūṭ al-a‘imma al-khamsa*, ed. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (bound with Ibn al-Qaysarānī, *Shurūṭ al-a‘imma al-sitta*, Cairo, n.d.), 79–83; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Siyānat Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim min al-ikhlāl wa-’l-ghalaṭ wa-ḥimāyatuhū min al-isqāṭ wa-’l-saqāṭ*, ed. Muwaffaq b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Qādir ([Beirut], 1404/1984), 97–98; Ibn Rushayd, *Kitāb al-Sanan al-abyan wa-’l-mawrid al-am‘an fi ’l-muḥākama bayn al-imāmayn fi ’l-sanad al-mu‘an‘an*, ed. Muḥammad al-Ḥabīb b. al-Khūja (Tunis, 1397/1977), 138–40; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 12:571.

³¹ ‘Alī b. Ibrāhīm records that Ibn Abī Ḥātim made three journeys, which is rather confusing because in the same passage he indicates that Ibn Abī Ḥātim actually left al-Rayy four times. The word he uses for journey is “*riḥla*,” apparently in the specific sense of “*riḥla fi ṭalab al-‘ilm*,” or “a journey to collect ḥadīth.” He may not have considered Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s pilgrimage in 260/873 a “*riḥla*.”

studies were largely unstructured. Students came and went as they pleased and studied with whomever they liked, with the chief attractions being the great scholars of the age who were recognized as watersheds in the flow of ḥadīth from one generation to the next. Many of Ibn Abī Ḥātim's teachers are now little more than names to us, but it is clear that his overriding aim was to gather the threads of ḥadīth criticism from earlier generations. When he finally returned to al-Rayy for good, he had studied with the greatest ḥadīth scholars of his age.

A. *First Journey to Collect Ḥadīth*

In 255/868, at the age of fifteen, Ibn Abī Ḥātim joined his father on the pilgrimage to Mecca. The biographer 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm says that it was not until they arrived at Dhu 'l-Hulayfa, a village located a few kilometers outside of Medina, that Ibn Abī Ḥātim reached puberty. This pleased his father since it meant that his son, as an adult, would receive the full religious benefit of his pilgrimage. For his part, Ibn Abī Ḥātim accepted it as another example of the good luck he enjoyed throughout his life. He and his father availed themselves of the opportunity to collect ḥadīth in the cities they passed through and made several detours for this purpose, studying in Baghdad, Samarrā, Damascus, Wāsiṭ and al-Kūfa.

Baghdad was the intellectual capital of the Islamic world and its significance for the students of ḥadīth lay in the fact that it had been the home of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal and Yahyā b. Ma'īn (158/775–233/847),³² scholars whom Ibn Abī Ḥātim in his *Taqdīm* memorializes as distinguished experts in ḥadīth criticism. Many of their students still taught there and these were the individuals whom Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his father sought out. The most prominent student of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal that they met in Baghdad was 'Abd Allāh (213/828–290/903),³³ one of the two gifted sons of Ibn Ḥanbal who played major roles in the preservation and propagation of his teachings. (In 264/877, Ibn Abī Ḥātim would encounter the other, Ṣāliḥ, in Isfahan.) He later corresponded with 'Abd Allāh, obtaining his father's technical comments on specific ḥadīth (*ʿilal al-ḥadīth*) and his declarations on

³² Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:106–7.

³³ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:511.

religious questions (*masā'il*) from him in this fashion.³⁴ 'Abd Allāh was also a prominent student of Yaḥyā b. Ma'īn.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim also studied with 'Abbās b. Muḥammad al-Dūrī (200/816–271/884)³⁵ in Baghdad. Although he appears to have been very prominent during his lifetime, the standard sources give us little information about him, for they are preoccupied, to the exclusion of much else, by the reports that he drank wine. He was the student of a number of scholars, but his greatest importance came from his role as the chief transmitter of the *Kitāb al-Ta'rikh* of Yaḥyā b. Ma'īn.³⁶ He was the source of much of the material from and about Yaḥyā b. Ma'īn that Ibn Abī Ḥātim used in the *Taqdima* and his other works.

It is most likely that it was in Baghdad that Ibn Abī Ḥātim met 'Uthmān b. Sa'īd al-Dārimī (200/816–282/895),³⁷ however, there is no positive indication of this, for his entry in *Jarḥ* (3[1]:153) has not survived intact. Dārimī's home was in Herat, but he travelled extensively. He studied law with Shāfi'ī's famous pupil Abū Ya'qūb Yūsuf b. Yaḥyā al-Buwayṭī (d. 231/845)³⁸ and ḥadīth with Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, 'Alī b. al-Madīnī (161/777–234/849),³⁹ Ishāq b. Rāhawayh (161/778–238/852)⁴⁰ and Yaḥyā b. Ma'īn. Like 'Abbās al-Dūrī, he served as an important channel for the teachings of Yaḥyā b. Ma'īn. Dārimī wrote several works, including one attacking the Mu'tazilite scholar Bishr al-Marīsī (d. 218/833)⁴¹ and a polemic entitled *Kitāb al-Radd 'ala 'l-Jahmīya*.⁴² Ibn Abī Ḥātim himself would later write a tract against the Jahmites.

³⁴ *Jarḥ*, 2(2):7.

³⁵ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh*, 12:144–46; Ibn Abī Ya'la, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:236–39; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 12:522–24. Ibn Abī Ḥātim's statement that he studied with 'Abbās al-Dūrī in the presence of his father indicates that it occurred during his first visit there; *Jarḥ*, 3(1):216.

³⁶ Published as volumes 3 and 4 of Aḥmad Muḥammad Nūr Sayf, *Yaḥyā ibn Ma'īn wa-Ta'rikhuhū*, 4 vols. (Mecca [i.e. Cairo], 1979).

³⁷ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:600–1.

³⁸ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:491.

³⁹ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:108.

⁴⁰ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:109–10.

⁴¹ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:616–17.

⁴² Ed. Gösta Vitestam, Leiden, 1960.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim performed the pilgrimage a second time in 260/873.⁴³ His father Abū Ḥātim was 65 years old by this time, which may have been what kept him from accompanying his son again. Ibn Abī Ḥātim left al-Rayy in the company of a number of local scholars of ḥadīth, of whom only the poorly-known Muḥammad b. Ḥammād al-Ṭīhrānī (d. 271/884)⁴⁴ is named.

B. *Second Journey to Collect Ḥadīth*

In 262/875 Ibn Abī Ḥātim made his second journey to collect ḥadīth. He was now Abū Ḥātim's only surviving son and his father initially refused to allow him to go. But in the face of his son's insistence and the intervention of Abū Zur'a, Abū Ḥātim eventually relented, imposing the condition that he return within a certain period of time. This trip took him to Egypt and Syria. In 262/875 he reached Egypt, where he studied ḥadīth in both al-Fuṣṭāṭ and Alexandria. Al-Fuṣṭāṭ, near the site where Cairo would later be founded in the fourth/tenth century, was a great scholarly center where the legacy of Shāfi'ī survived in the form of jurist's students. Ibn Abī Ḥātim would later go on to write a biography of Shāfi'ī.

Probably the most important scholar whom Ibn Abī Ḥātim met in al-Fuṣṭāṭ was al-Rabī' b. Sulaymān, whose reputation rests on the fact that he was a favorite pupil of Shāfi'ī and one of the main transmitters of his works. Although al-Rabī' himself was not regarded as much of a legal mind, Abū Isma'īl Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Tirmidhī knew of two hundred students from all corners of the Islamic world who had attended his teaching circle to hear the works of Shāfi'ī. On his own trip to al-Fuṣṭāṭ in 228/842, Abū Zur'a was surprised by the amount to be learned in Egypt and resorted to sell-

⁴³ The "*fi sanati thintayn*" in Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 13:266 is an obvious mistake for the "*fi sanati sittin*" given in the other sources.

⁴⁴ The works which deal with ḥadīth transmitters, even Ibn Abī Ḥātim's *Jarḥ* (3[2]:240), have very little to say about Abū 'Abd Allāh Muḥammad b. Ḥammād al-Ṭīhrānī other than that he was well travelled, having taught in al-Rayy, Syria, Alexandria and Baghdad. Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his father studied with him in al-Rayy and Ibn Abī Ḥātim studied with him on his own in Baghdad and Alexandria. Muḥammad b. Ḥammād al-Ṭīhrānī eventually settled in Ascalon, where he died in 271/884 (Yāqūt has 261, which is clearly a mistake); al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'riḥ*, 2:271–72; Yāqūt, *Buldān*, 3:564–65; Dhahabī, *Tadhkira*, 610–11; Ṣafadī, *Wāfi*, 3:24; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 4:24; Suyūṭī, *Husn al-muḥāḍara fi ta'riḥ Miṣr wa-l-Qāhira*, ed. Muḥammad Abu 'l-Faḍl Ibrāhīm, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1387/1967–1387/1968), 1:349.

ing some cloth he had brought with him in order to pay a copyist for the works of Shāfi'ī through al-Rabī'.⁴⁵ Abū Ḥātim had also studied with al-Rabī' when he was in Egypt and he served as an intermediary for many of the reports ascribed to al-Rabī' in his son's *Ādāb al-Shāfi'ī wa-manāqibuhū*. Al-Rabī' spent his entire life in Egypt. Born in 174/790, he began his career as a teaching assistant in the mosque of 'Amr b. al-'Āṣ in al-Fuṣṭāṭ. Shāfi'ī took him under his wing and when al-Rabī' married in 201/816, he furnished a portion of the dowry and secured him employment as a muezzin.⁴⁶ When al-Rabī' died in 270/883, his fame was such that the Ṭulūnid ruler of Egypt Khumārawayh (r. 270/884–282/896) presided at his funeral.

Another highly esteemed scholar with whom Ibn Abī Ḥātim studied in Egypt was Muḥammad b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abd al-Ḥakam (182/799–268/882),⁴⁷ the son of the prominent jurist 'Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥakam (155/772–214/829)⁴⁸ and the brother of the historian 'Abd al-Raḥmān (d. 257/870).⁴⁹ Ibn Abī Ḥātim's father had studied with Muḥammad earlier and material from him also figures prominently in Ibn Abī Ḥātim's biography of Shāfi'ī.

From Egypt Ibn Abī Ḥātim went to Beirut and visited other cities on the Levantine coast. He continued on to Damascus and the fortified cities on the Byzantine frontier. He passed through Baghdad again on the way home.⁵⁰ He was, we are told, so brilliant that in a short period of time he was able to accomplish what would have taken others much longer. 'Alī b. Ibrāhīm records an anecdote Ibn Abī Ḥātim related illustrating the hectic schedule imposed on him by his father's time restriction:

We had been in Egypt for seven months without having so much as tasted meat broth. Every day was divided up between attending the classes of various teachers and every night was devoted to copying and collating. One day a companion and I went to see a teacher, only to be told that he was sick. On our way home we saw a nice fish and bought it. When we arrived at our lodgings, the time had already

⁴⁵ *Taqdima*, 340; *Ādāb al-Shāfi'ī*, 75; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 3:246.

⁴⁶ *Ādāb al-Shāfi'ī*, 273, 125.

⁴⁷ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:474.

⁴⁸ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:467–68.

⁴⁹ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:355–56.

⁵⁰ *Jarḥ*, 3(1):175.

come for another class and, as a consequence, we were unable to prepare the fish. We went to the class and continued thus for three days and the fish was about to go bad. We ate it raw since we did not have enough time to give it to someone to cook.⁵¹

Ibn Abī Ḥātim noted that this tale illustrated the incompatibility of knowledge and comfort.

C. *Third Journey to Collect Ḥadīth*

Ibn Abī Ḥātim's final journey was in 264/877 to Isfahan, where he met Ṣāliḥ (203/818–265/878),⁵² the other famous son of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, who was the *qādī* there. Like his brother 'Abd Allāh, Ṣāliḥ played a large role in the transmission of their father's religious views. People used to write him with questions of religious significance and these he would submit to his father. Ṣāliḥ had also studied with Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālīsī (133/750–203/818)⁵³ and the ḥadīth critic 'Alī b. al-Madīnī. Ibn Abī Ḥātim took many of Ibn al-Madīnī's critical judgements from Ṣāliḥ and corresponded with him. The sources mention that Ibn Abī Ḥātim also studied with Yūnus b. Ḥabīb al-Iṣbahānī (d. 267/880)⁵⁴ and Usayd b. 'Āṣim (d. 270/883)⁵⁵ in Isfahan. The former was best known for being a transmitter of the *Musnad* of Abū Dāwūd al-Ṭayālīsī and the latter is known only as a scholar of ḥadīth who travelled extensively.

V. *Later Life and Death*

After his journey to Isfahan in 264/877, Ibn Abī Ḥātim was content to remain in al-Rayy for the rest of his life. He carried on what appears to have been an extensive correspondence with several of the scholars he had met on his trips. We do not know how he earned his living. He married shortly after his first pilgrimage in 255/868, at the age of sixteen. He and his wife remained together for some seventy years but produced no children, a circumstance that attracted the attention of later authors.⁵⁶ A pious legend related by Abū Ya'la

⁵¹ Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 13:266; id., *Tadhkira*, 3:830; Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rīkh*, 41:339–40.

⁵² Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:510.

⁵³ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:97–98.

⁵⁴ Abū Nu'aym, *Akhhbār Iṣbahān*, 2:345–46.

⁵⁵ *Farh*, 1(1):318; Abū Nu'aym, *Akhhbār Iṣbahān*, 1:226–27; Ṣafadī, *Wāfi*, 9:261.

⁵⁶ Ibn Abī Ḥātim's *kunya* "Abū Muḥammad" did not imply that he had a son

al-Khalīlī ascribed it to an illness which afflicted him when he was a boy and which his father magically cured.

Abū Ḥātim knew the greatest name of God. One day his son fell ill. Abū Ḥātim resisted invoking the greatest name in prayer since he had no desire to gain the fruits of this world with it. However when the illness worsened, he despaired and invoked the greatest name in prayer. His son recovered. In a dream Abū Ḥātim was informed, "I have answered your prayer. However, your son will now produce no children."⁵⁷

According to another opinion, Ibn Abī Ḥātim simply never touched his wife, perhaps out of pious motives.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim's reputation for personal religiosity earned him a place in the pietist tradition of Islam. Abū Ya'la al-Khalīlī said that he was considered to be a saint (*min al-abdāl*).⁵⁸ One legend which several scholars recount, not always without skepticism, depicts his special relationship with God. It concerns his issuance of a pass to heaven as recompense for a charitable act. This legend is found in two basic forms. The first revolves around the rebuilding of a city wall.

The wall of one of the frontier cities had collapsed. Ibn Abī Ḥātim said to the people, "Are you not going to rebuild it?" and exhorted them to reconstruct it. He detected some hesitancy among them, so he said, "Who will rebuild it, when I guarantee that God will grant that person entrance into Paradise?" One of the merchants stood and said, "Write this guaranty for me with your own hand. Here are one thousand dinars for the rebuilding." So Ibn Abī Ḥātim wrote the guaranty on a slip of paper. The wall was rebuilt and shortly after that the merchant happened to die. When the people attended his funeral, a slip of paper fluttered out from the burial shroud. It turned out to be the slip of paper that Ibn Abī Ḥātim had written for him. On the back of it was written, "We have fulfilled the guaranty for you. Do not do this again."⁵⁹

In the other version of the same story, ascribed to al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad al-Ṣaffār,⁶⁰ who claimed that Ibn Abī Ḥātim related it to

named Muḥammad, for boys were often given a *kunya* at an early age. His father defended this custom with testimony from the ḥadīth; 'Abbādī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 40.

⁵⁷ Dhahabī, *Sīyar*, 13:266.

⁵⁸ *Irshād*, 2:683–84.

⁵⁹ Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 11:191; Suyūṭī, *Huffāz*, 345–46; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt*, 2:309. Ibn al-ʿImād and Suyūṭī locate the incident in Ṭūs.

⁶⁰ Al-Ḥusayn b. Aḥmad al-Ṣaffār (d. 372/982) was an unreliable transmitter from

him, a friend in Isfahan sends Ibn Abī Ḥātim a shipment of grain to sell in al-Rayy and asks him to use the proceeds to buy him a house there. He sells the grain, however, he goes on to distribute the money to the poor and then writes his friend to inform him that he has purchased a mansion for him in Paradise. The friend expresses his satisfaction with the transaction but nevertheless prudently requests a receipt, which Ibn Abī Ḥātim furnishes. Later in a dream Ibn Abī Ḥātim is informed that his promise has been kept, but is warned not to try anything of the sort again.⁶¹

Before Ibn Abī Ḥātim's death in 327/938, the last reference to him that can be dated goes back to the year 275/888. According to the geographer and historian Yāqūt, it was in this year that Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan al-Mādhārā'ī conquered al-Rayy.⁶² Mādhārā'ī had formerly been the secretary of the Turkish general Kūtikīn b. Sātikīn, whose father had conquered al-Rayy in 266/879. For Yāqūt, Mādhārā'ī's conquest was a turning point in the history of the city since he instituted Shī'ism as the official cult (i.e. *aẓhara 'l-tashayyū'*) and that spelled the end of Sunnism there. The new ruler began to honor the local Shī'ites and this official patronage led to the appearance of a spate of books of Shī'ite cast from would-be protégés. Yāqūt singles out Ibn Abī Ḥātim by mentioning that he presented the new ruler with a number of books, one of which was on "the merits of the family of the Prophet" (*faḍā'il ahl al-bayt*).⁶³

It is rather difficult to gauge Ibn Abī Ḥātim's prestige among his contemporaries, but one interesting report does give us some inkling of the fame he enjoyed during his own lifetime. It concerns a disagreement between two prominent scholars in Baghdad who decide to place their dispute before him for settlement.

Herat who travelled extensively; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh*, 8:8–9; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 2:261.

⁶¹ Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 13:267; id., *Tadhkira*, 3:831; Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3:326; Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:280.

⁶² Yāqūt, *Buldān*, 2:901 (Yāqūt gives the *nisba* as "Māridānī"). Although H.L. Gottschalk does not seem to have been aware of this reference, he rejects the notion that the Mādhārā'ī mentioned in Ṭabari's *Ta'rikh*—who was, without a doubt, the individual Yāqūt discusses—was a member of the powerful family which operated in Egypt; *Die Mādhārā'ijūn: Ein Beitrag zur Geschichte Aegyptens unter dem Islām* (Berlin, 1931), 29, n. 1; 52, n. 1.

⁶³ Although we do not know exactly what distinguished a Sunnite from a Shī'ite in this period, the question of the alleged Shī'ism of Ibn Abī Ḥātim should be addressed. Louis Massignon attributes to him "*une sort de semi-shī'isme*" which he describes in a note as a "*semi-shī'isme bien mitigé*," giving 'Alī precedence over 'Uthmān

One day Ibn Ṣā'id⁶⁴ related a ḥadīth in Baghdad and made a mistake in its isnād. Ibn 'Uqda⁶⁵ censured him for it. So the students of Ibn Ṣā'id attacked Ibn 'Uqda and took themselves to the vizier 'Alī b. 'Īsā and he imprisoned Ibn 'Uqda. The vizier said, "Who can be asked or consulted?" They said, "Ibn Abī Ḥātim." The vizier wrote to him, asking about that. Ibn Abī Ḥātim examined and considered the matter and it turned out that Ibn 'Uqda was right about the ḥadīth. Ibn Abī Ḥātim wrote that to the vizier. He released Ibn 'Uqda and his prestige increased.⁶⁶

This incident cannot be dated with complete exactness; 'Alī b. 'Īsā served as vizier twice, from 300/912 to 304/916 and again in 314/926, before dying in 334/945. In any case, many years had passed since Ibn Abī Ḥātim had last been seen in Baghdad and the report is evidence of a far-flung renown.

while it affirmed, in agreement with Shāfi'ī, that the only *mahdī* would be 'Īsā; *La Passion de Husayn Ibn Mansūr Hallāj*, 4 vols. (Paris, 1975), 1:463; trans. Herbert Mason, *The Passion of al-Hallāj*, 4 vols. (Princeton, 1982), 1:416 (Ibn Abī Ḥātim's name is given incorrectly here). The assertion that Ibn Abī Ḥātim gave precedence to 'Alī over 'Uthmān is based on the authority of Abu 'l-Faḍl Aḥmad b. 'Alī al-Sulaymānī (d. 404/1013), who lists Ibn Abī Ḥātim as one of the six scholars of ḥadīth who gave 'Alī precedence over 'Uthmān. (The other five named are al-A'mash, Abū Ḥanīfā, Shu'ba b. al-Ḥajjāj, 'Abd al-Razzāq and 'Ubayd Allāh b. Mūsā.); Dhahabī, *Mīzān*, 2:588; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 3:432–33. Sunnites tend to place 'Uthmān and 'Alī on the same level or to rank the merit of the first four caliphs according to the order of their accession, which would give 'Uthmān precedence over 'Alī. Dhahabī and Ibn Ḥajar regard Abu 'l-Faḍl al-Sulaymānī's statement with skepticism. It is more than likely that his assertion was entirely the result of his having come across Ibn Abī Ḥātim's name in the isnād of a ḥadīth claiming that 'Alī had precedence over 'Uthmān. For what it is worth, it may be mentioned that in his *Farḥ*, under the letter 'ayn, Ibn Abī Ḥātim places the name "Umar" before "Uthmān," and "Uthmān" before "'Alī." Massignon's assertion that Ibn Abī Ḥātim believed that the *mahdī* would be 'Īsā is based on Ibn Abī Ḥātim's transmission of a ḥadīth of Shāfi'ī, through Yūnus b. 'Abd Allāh, containing among other things the words "... there is no *mahdī* but 'Īsā . . .;" Subkī, *Tabaqāt*, 1:280–81. Shī'ites, as a rule, identify 'Alī or one of his descendants as the *mahdī*; Sunnites hold that the *mahdī* will be 'Īsā. None of these indications is unimpeachable. It is not out of the question that Ibn Abī Ḥātim subscribed to an unusual doctrinal formulation which combined the doctrine of 'Alī's precedence over 'Uthmān with mainstream Ḥanbalism. If this were the case—and it is by no means clear that it was—, it perhaps would have been more to the point to call this a slightly modified form of Ḥanbalism rather than a very modified form of semi-Shī'ism.

⁶⁴ Abū Muḥammad Yaḥyā b. Muḥammad b. Ṣā'id al-Baghdādī (228/842–318/930); Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:176.

⁶⁵ Abu 'l-'Abbās Aḥmad b. Muḥammad b. Sa'id b. 'Uqda al-Kūfī (249/863–333/944); Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:182.

⁶⁶ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rīkh*, 5:18; Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rīkh*, 41:343; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 15:348.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim died in the month of Muḥarram in the year 327/938. Abū Yaʿlā al-Khalīlī records that before his death he ordered that the notes of his father and Abū Zurʿa be buried. He did this, most likely, because he felt they contained material which would tarnish their reputation.⁶⁷ His own works he placed in a charitable trust (*waqf*) and appointed the judge ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Dārastīnī⁶⁸ as his executor. At his funeral, the preacher ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Miṣrī⁶⁹ eulogized him to the biographer ʿAlī b. Ibrāhīm: "For eighty years [he was] a man on a single path and he never deviated from the way."⁷⁰ Abū Yaʿlā al-Khalīlī wrote that it was claimed that, "The *sunna* in al-Rayy was sealed by Ibn Abī Ḥātim al-Rāzī."⁷¹

VII. Works

Ibn Abī Ḥātim's fame rests on his proximity to the two great scholars Abū Ḥātim and Abū Zurʿa, on his reputation for piety and on the many books he wrote. The earliest record of his literary output is the one provided about a century after his death by Abū Yaʿlā al-Khalīlī in his *Irshād*:

He has writings too famous [to need] to be described on law, the dates [of the ḥadīth transmitters] and the differences of opinion of the Companions, the Followers and the other ancient scholars.⁷²

It is a pity that Abū Yaʿlā al-Khalīlī did not bother to name these books, because none of these topics unambiguously corresponds to

⁶⁷ For the practice of destroying books, see Franz Rosenthal, "Of Making Books there is no End," in George N. Atiyeh (ed.), *The Book in the Islamic World: The written Word and Communication in the Middle East* (Albany, 1995), 39–43.

⁶⁸ ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn al-Dārastīnī (the *nisba* is recorded in several different forms) is mentioned in a few anecdotes connected with Ibn Abī Ḥātim, but is otherwise unknown.

⁶⁹ ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Miṣrī (d. 338/949) was a native of Baghdad who settled for a while in Egypt. He was known for his preaching and the many books he wrote on asceticism; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Taʾrīkh*, 12:75–76; Dhahabī, *Ibar*, 2:247–48; Suyūṭī, *Husn al-muḥādara*, 1:55; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt*, 2:347–48.

⁷⁰ Ibn ʿAsākir, *Taʾrīkh*, 41:338; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 13:265; Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3:325.

⁷¹ *Irshād*, 2:683.

⁷² Abū Yaʿlā al-Khalīlī, *Irshād*, 2:683; Yāqūt, *Buldān*, 2:899; Dhahabī, *Ibar*, 208; id., *Siyar*, 13:264; id., *Tadhkira*, 3:830; Yāfiʿī, *Murʾāt al-janān*, 2:289; Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3:325; Suyūṭī, *Mufasssīrīn*, 63; Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:280; ʿUlaymī, *Minhaj*, 2:18; Ibn al-ʿImād, *Shadharāt*, 2:308.

any of the nineteen books and book titles that have reached us.⁷³ This may suggest that Ibn Abī Ḥātim wrote more works than we can now identify. Later, Yaḥyā b. Manda (434/1043–511/1118) would supply the titles of several now-lost works in an important passage quoted in a number of biographical dictionaries.⁷⁴ It is clear that Ibn Abī Ḥātim's primary interest was in the reports transmitted from the earlier generations of Muslims, in particular from the Prophet Muḥammad. His works fall into three broad categories: the technical aspects of ḥadīth criticism, theology and religious subjects, biography and history.

A. Works of Ḥadīth Criticism

1. *Bayān khaṭa' Muḥammad ibn Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī fi 'l-Ta'rikh*⁷⁵

(Sezgin, GAS, 1:179, no. 6)

Sakhāwī (831/1427–902/1497) mentions in his *I'ṭlān*⁷⁶ that he possessed a book by Ibn Abī Ḥātim criticizing the famous ḥadīth scholar Bukhārī and it is likely that this is the one. There was no love lost between Bukhārī and the scholars of al-Rayy. In 250/864, Bukhārī visited the city and Abū Ḥātim and Abū Zur'a attended his classes. Some time after he left, the news reached them that he subscribed to the doctrine that one's recitation of the Qur'ān was created, an opinion which they found obnoxious, and as a consequence they rejected his transmissions out of pique.⁷⁷ In the introduction to *Bayān* (p. 2), Ibn Abī Ḥātim recounts that when Bukhārī's *Kitāb al-Ta'rikh* [*al-kabīr*]⁷⁸ was brought to Abū Zur'a, he undertook to correct the mistakes in it, and later Ibn Abī Ḥātim went over Abū Zur'a's corrections with his father. In most instances Abū Ḥātim accepted the emendations of Abū Zur'a. The vast majority of the corrections concern the distortion of the names of transmitters and Abū Zur'a

⁷³ In *Muṣjam al-kutub* (p. 121) Ibn al-Mibrad—or his continuator—does ascribe a *Kitāb Ikhtilāf al-Ṣaḥāba wa-'l-Ṭabī'in* to Ibn Abī Ḥātim, perhaps on the basis of this passage.

⁷⁴ Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 13:264–65; Ṣafadī, *Wāfi*, 18:228; Kutubī, *Fawāt*, 2:287–88; Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3:325; Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:280.

⁷⁵ Published as *Tatimmat bayān khaṭa' al-Bukhārī fi Ta'rikhihi*, ed. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Yaḥyā al-Mu'allimī al-Yamānī (Hyderabad, 1370/1961).

⁷⁶ Sakhāwī, *I'ṭlān*, 220; trans. F. Rosenthal, 437.

⁷⁷ *Jaḥ*, 3(2):191. For further discussions of this matter, see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh*, 2:30–33 and Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 12:453–63.

⁷⁸ 4 vols. in 8 parts (Hyderabad, 1361–65).

claimed that these errors arose when Bukhārī copied the names from unpointed texts.⁷⁹ Two centuries later, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī noted that the version of Bukhārī's *Ta'rikh* which arrived in al-Rayy must have differed from the one that was known to succeeding generations, for it does not contain many of the mistakes the scholars of al-Rayy attributed to him.⁸⁰

2. *ʿIlal al-ḥadīth* (Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:179, no. 2)

This work has survived and has been published.⁸¹ It consists of the replies of Abū Ḥātim and Abū Zur'a to Ibn Abī Ḥātim's questions concerning some three thousand ḥadīth with defective isnāds. The ḥadīth are arranged by subject and in each case the defect is specified. *Kitāb al-ʿIlal al-kabīr* of Ibn Abī Ḥātim's contemporary, Abū ʿĪsā al-Tirmidhī, is a work on a similar topic, although its arrangement was different.⁸²

3. *Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa-ʾl-taʿdīl* (Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:178–79, no. 1)

Ibn Abī Ḥātim's most important effort in the realm of personality criticism was his famous *Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa-ʾl-taʿdīl*. In the work's introductory section (1[1]:38), he gives a brief sketch of his plan:

In our relation of personality criticism (*al-jarḥ wa-ʾl-taʿdīl*) in our present book, we proceeded straightaway to those expert and knowledgeable in it, the earliest [of them] and then the latest, until our relation wound up with my father and Abū Zur'a. We did not relate from some people who have spoken on that [topic] because of the meagerness of their expertise in it. We ascribed each relation to its relater and the response to its author. We examined the differences in the statements of the *imāms* regarding the transmitters they were asked about and left out the contradiction in their statements. We attached the appropriate and most likely responses from [the *imāms*] to each [transmitter] who was examined. Nevertheless, we have mentioned many names which have not been subjected to ḥadīth criticism, recording them in order that the book include all those from whom ḥadīth (*al-ʿilm*) have been transmitted, in the hope of finding criticism

⁷⁹ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Mūḍih awḥām al-jamʿ wa-ʾl-tafrīq*, ed. ʿAbd al-Muʿṭī Amīn Qalʿajī, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1407/1987), 1:14–15.

⁸⁰ *Mūḍih awḥām*, 1:15.

⁸¹ 2 vols. (Cairo, 1343–44).

⁸² *ʿIlal al-Tirmidhī al-kabīr*, ed. Ḥamza Dīb Muṣṭafā, 2 vols. (Amman, 1406/1986). It should be noted that Tirmidhī's book has not survived in its original form and its present arrangement by legal topic is the work of a later hand.

on them [in the future]. We will attach [the critical judgements] to them later. We arranged all of the names alphabetically and we further arranged the more common names alphabetically by the name of their fathers, in order to make it easy for the researcher to find what he wants and direct himself to where he needs to go.

Jarḥ is a comprehensive work of personality criticism, containing about eighteen thousand entries. The entries are brief as a rule, recording the subject's teachers, his students and assessments of his merits as a transmitter from Abū Ḥātim, Abū Zur'a and other prominent critics.

According to Abū Aḥmad al-Ḥākim al-Kabīr (285/898–378/988), the composition of *Jarḥ* was inspired by the arrival in al-Rayy of Bukhārī's *Ta'rikh*.

I was in al-Rayy and one day I saw them reading the *Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa-l-ta'dīl* to Ibn Abī Ḥātim. When they finished, I said to Ibn 'Abdawayh al-Warrāq,⁸³ "What kind of joke is this? I see you reading Muḥammad b. Ismā'īl al-Bukhārī's *Kitāb al-Ta'rikh* in its entirety to your teacher and you have attributed it to Abū Zur'a and Abū Ḥātim." [Ibn 'Abdawayh] said, "You should know that when [Bukhārī's] book was brought to Abū Zur'a and Abū Ḥātim, they said, 'This is excellent and indispensable information. We ought not transmit it on anybody's authority but our own.' So they made Ibn Abī Ḥātim sit until he had asked them about the transmitters in it one by one. They added to it and subtracted from it and Ibn Abī Ḥātim attributed it to them."⁸⁴

The claim that the scholars of al-Rayy plagiarized Bukhārī's *Ta'rikh* is puzzling. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Yaḥyā al-Mu'allimī al-Yamānī, the editor of both *Jarḥ* and Bukhārī's *Ta'rikh*, has pointed out in his introduction to the *Taqdima*, that even the most cursory comparison of the two works reveals that this is not the case. As their titles suggest, the works of Bukhārī and Ibn Abī Ḥātim differ greatly in emphasis. While Bukhārī supplies dates for many transmitters, often he neglects to provide any evaluation of their reliability. On the other hand, *Jarḥ* contains few dates, but assesses the reliability of

⁸³ He seems to be unknown outside of this anecdote.

⁸⁴ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Mūḍiḥ awhām*, 1:15–16; Ibn 'Asākir, *Ta'rikh*, 10:164–65; Yāqūt, *Buldān*, 2:899; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 16:373; id. *Tadhkira*, 3:978. For other remarks on the alleged plagiarism of the scholars of al-Rayy, see Abū Ya'lā al-Khalīlī, *Irshād*, 3:962–66; Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ*, 58–59, 194; Ibn Khayr al-Ishbīlī, *Fihrist mā rawāhu 'an shuyūkhīhī*, 2d ed. (Cairo, 1382/1963), 208.

almost every transmitter. Ibn Abī Ḥātim does appear to have taken (without acknowledgement) a number of the shortest entries directly from Bukhārī's book. The transmitters treated in these would appear to be those whom Ibn Abī Ḥātim—as he describes in his introduction—included for the sake of completeness, although he had not yet come across any critical judgement on them.

Like Bukhārī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim adheres to a more or less alphabetical arrangement of the transmitters. It appears that *Ta'riḫ* was the first work of the kind arranged in this fashion. (The arrangements of the two books do differ in that Bukhārī piously begins his book with the "Muḥammads," while Ibn Abī Ḥātim places them in their correct alphabetical position.) It is likely that seeing this novel arrangement adopted by Ibn Abī Ḥātim is what caused the surprise of Abū Aḥmad al-Ḥākim al-Kabīr and blinded him to the obvious differences in the contents of the two works.

It is worth noting that although Bukhārī's *Ta'riḫ* and Ibn Abī Ḥātim's *Jarḥ* were highly admired and widely cited by later authors, neither work represents a true prototype of the biographical dictionary devoted to ḥadīth transmitters as it subsequently developed. In terms of arrangement, most later authors preferred a strict alphabetical ordering of the entries. Furthermore, works like Dhahabī's *Siyar a'lām al-nubalā'* and Ibn Ḥajar's *Tahdhīb al-tahdhīb* include judgements on the reliability of the transmitters along with dates. In many instances, they also provide additional information for the most part lacking in the earlier works, creating more textured portraits which humanize the subjects to a much greater degree. Although the technical component—for the most part lifted directly from the earlier works—remained prominent, the later dictionaries also attempted to answer the question What kind of people were the early transmitters?

4. *Kitāb al-Kunā*

Yahyā b. Manda mentions that Ibn Abī Ḥātim wrote a work bearing this title. Most likely it was similar to a work with the identical title by Bukhārī (Hyderabad, 1360), which treats the transmitters who were most commonly known by their paidonymic (*kunya*), rather than by their given name (*ism*). Therefore it seems possible that what Yahyā b. Manda refers to as a separate book is in fact the last section of *Jarḥ*, which addresses this same topic.

5. *Kitāb al-Marāsīl* (Sezgin, GAS, 1:179, no. 4)

This work is extant and has been published.⁸⁵ In ḥadīth criticism for the transmission of a scholar from another to be considered valid, it is necessary that there be evidence that they met. *Marāsīl* is an alphabetical list of scholars who transmitted ḥadīth from people with whom they did not actually study. 'Alī b. al-Madīnī had earlier written a work in this domain entitled *Kitāb al-'Ilal*,⁸⁶ which Ibn Abī Ḥātim quotes extensively. *Al-Marāsīl* of Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī (202/817–275/888) is a wholly different kind of work, being a collection of ḥadīth with interrupted isnāds.

6. *Taqdimat al-ma'rifa li-Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa-'l-ta'dīl*

As the title "The Introduction to the *Kitāb al-Jarḥ wa-'l-ta'dīl*" indicates, this work was intended to provide a foundation for Ibn Abī Ḥātim's great work of personality criticism. The phrase "*taqdimat al-ma'rifa*" translates the Greek *pronōstikon*, with the literal meaning of "the provision of advance knowledge." Yaḥyā b. Manda lists the *Taqdima* as a work separate from *Jarḥ*, giving it the title *Kitāb Taqdimat al-jarḥ wa-'l-ta'dīl*. The *Taqdima* will be dealt with in detail in the following chapters of the present study.

B. *Works on Theology and other Religious Subjects*

7. *Aṣl al-sunna wa-'l-tiqād al-dīn* (Sezgin, GAS, 1:179, no. 8)

This is apparently the work which Ibn Abī Ya'qūb refers to as *Kitāb al-Sunna*.⁸⁷ This short tract survives in a single copy preserved in Maktabat al-Asad in Damascus (no. 3748, ff. 166a–168a) and is reproduced, with minor differences, in Abu 'l-Qāsim al-Lālakā'ī's *Sharḥ uṣūl i'tiqād ahl al-sunna wa-'l-jamā'a*.⁸⁸ In this work, Ibn Abī Ḥātim records the theological views of his father and Abū Zur'a.

⁸⁵ This work has been published a number of times. The edition used in the present book is that of Subḥī al-Badrī al-Sāmarrā'ī (Baghdad, 1386/1967).

⁸⁶ Ed. 'Abd al-Mu'ī Amin Qal'ajī (Aleppo, 1400/1980).

⁸⁷ *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:55; Ibn Muflīḥ, *Maqṣid*, 2:106; 'Ulaymī, *Minhaj*, 2:18.

⁸⁸ Ed. Aḥmad Sa'd Hamdān, 2d ed., 4 vols. (Riyadh, 1411), 1:176–82. Maḥmūd b. Muḥammad al-Ḥaddād provides a list of sources preserving passages from this work and a copy of the text in *Aqīdat Abī Ḥātim Muḥammad ibn Idrīs al-Rāzī wa-Abī Zur'a 'Ubayd Allāh ibn 'Abd al-Karīm al-Rāzī* (n.p., n.d.), 25–43.

8. *Kitāb Faḍā'il ahl al-bayt*

As was mentioned above, the historian Yāqūt says that Ibn Abī Ḥātim presented to the ruler of al-Rayy, Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan al-Mādhārā'i, a book on "the merits of the family of the Prophet."⁸⁹ It is unclear whether this was the exact title of the book. The work has not survived, although on the basis of its title it can be deduced that it was a collection of reports illustrating the outstanding qualities of the various members of the family of the Prophet.

9. *Kitāb Fawā'id al-Rāzīyīn*

The title of this lost work is given variously as *Kitāb Fawā'id ahl al-Rayy* or *Fawā'id al-Rāzīyīn*.⁹⁰ Abū Zur'a wrote a work entitled *Kitāb al-Rāzīyīn* and it too is now lost. Abū Zur'a's book was a collection of the ḥadīth transmitted by the scholars of al-Rayy, arranged by transmitter.⁹¹ Although no description of Ibn Abī Ḥātim's book has reached us, there is every reason to believe that it was substantially identical to that of his mentor, perhaps with the addition of comments from Abū Ḥātim.

10. *Kitāb al-Fawā'id al-kabīr*

Yahyā b. Manda ascribes a book entitled *Kitāb al-Fawā'id al-kabīr* to Ibn Abī Ḥātim.⁹² It, like *Kitāb Fawā'id al-Rāzīyīn*, has not reached us, nor is it anywhere described. Chances are that it was similar to his *Kitāb al-Rāzīyīn*, although not limited to the city of al-Rayy in its purview. We know of a collection of ḥadīth from Abū Zur'a called *Kitāb al-Fawā'id*,⁹³ which has also not survived. Again, it seems likely that Ibn Abī Ḥātim's work closely resembled that of Abū Zur'a.

⁸⁹ See above, p. 26.

⁹⁰ Abū Ya'lā al-Khalīlī, *Irshād*, 2:790; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 13:265; Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3:325; Ṣafadī, *Wāfi*, 18:228; Kutubī, *Fawāt*, 2:288. Ismail Paşa gives the title of the work as *Fawā'id al-zā'irīn* in *Hadīyat al-'arīfīn: asmā' al-mu'allifīn wa-āthār al-muṣannifīn*, ed. Kilisli Rifat Bilge and İbnülemin Mahmud Kemal İnal, 2 vols. (Istanbul, 1951–55), 1:col. 503 and in *Kitāb İdāḥ al-maknūn fi 'l-dhayl 'alā Kashf al-zunūn*, ed. Mehmet Şerefettin Yalçıkaya and Kilisli Rifat Bilge, 2 vols. (Istanbul, 1364/1945–1366/1947), 2:col. 206. It is also given that way in the 1951 Cairo edition of Kutubī's *Fawāt* (ed. Muḥammad Muḥyī al-Dīn 'Abd al-Ḥamīd), 1:542.

⁹¹ Bardha'i, *Du'afā'*, 2:582–83.

⁹² This book is called *Kitāb al-Fawā'id al-kubrā* in Ismail Paşa's *Hadīyat al-'arīfīn* (1:col. 513), his *İdāḥ al-maknūn* (2:col. 209) and the 1951 edition of Kutubī (1:542).

⁹³ Bardha'i, *Du'afā'*, 2:686.

11. *Al-Musnad*

Yahyā b. Manda attributes to Ibn Abī Ḥātim a *musnad*, a general collection of Prophetic ḥadīth. A persistent tradition insists that a “*musnad*” is a collection of ḥadīth arranged according to the Companion who transmitted them from the Prophet. In reality, the term “*musnad*” only implies that all the ḥadīth included have isnāds. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān al-Dārimī (181/797–255/869) seems to have called his ḥadīth collection a “*musnad*,” although the material is arranged by subject (*bāb*). The term “*sunan*” has come to be customarily applied to that type of work. “*Sunan*” only means that the contents are prescriptive, i.e. the ḥadīth illustrate *sunnas*, and thus, like “*musnad*,” does not indicate any particular arrangement of the material. The title of “*musnad*” was frequently applied to posthumous compilations of an individual’s transmissions, such as *Musnad al-Shāfi‘ī*,⁹⁴ *Musnad ‘Umar ibn ‘Abd al-‘Azīz* and the various *musnads* of Abū Ḥanīfa. In these cases, the *musnad* was a scholarly exercise undertaken by some later admirer who would cull all of the ḥadīth a particular figure quotes in his works and elsewhere and place them in a single book.⁹⁵ In applying the title of “*musnad*” to such a work, the compiler avoided making any claims in regard to the authenticity or character of the ḥadīth, beyond the implication that they had isnāds. The mechanical arrangement of the ḥadīth according to the transmitting Companion was favored in this sort of work because it was easily applied. It is not clear, therefore, whether Ibn Abī Ḥātim himself composed the *Musnad* ascribed to him, which according to Ibn Manda was originally in a thousand parts (*juz’*), or whether it was the work of a later hand. A small number of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s ḥadīth transmitted by Abu ‘l-Ḥasan b. al-Qaṣṣār (d. 397/1007) have been preserved in two manuscripts in Maktabat al-Asad in Damascus.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ See Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ’s comments on the composition of al-Aṣamm’s recension; *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:292.

⁹⁵ See Ibn Ḥajar al-‘Asqalānī, *al-Nukat ‘alā Kitāb Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ*, ed. Rabī‘ b. Hādī ‘Umayr, 2d ed., 2 vols. (Riyadh, 1408/1988), 1:446–47; I. Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, 2:229–30; *Muslim Studies*, 2:212–13; Muhammad Zubayr Siddiqi, *Ḥadīth Literature: Its Origin, Development, Special Features and Criticism* (Calcutta, 1961), 73.

⁹⁶ Maktabat al-Asad, no. 954, ff. 42a–44a and no. 3778, ff. 99a–109b. See Muḥammad Nāṣir al-Dīn al-Albānī, *Fahras makhtūṭāt Dār al-kutub al-Ḍāhirīya: al-muntakhab min makhtūṭāt al-ḥadīth* (Damascus, 1390/1970), 157, no. 568.

12. *Kitāb al-Radd ‘ala ‘l-Jahmīya* (Sezgin, GAS, 1:179, no. 10)

The existence of this now-lost treatise is attested to in several works.⁹⁷ Its title indicates that it was polemical attack against the Jahmites. Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s venture in this field was by no means the first and the topic appears to have been quite popular with the adherents of ḥadīth. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal’s *Kitāb al-Radd ‘ala ‘l-zanādiqa wa-‘l-Jahmīya*, Bukhārī’s *Kitāb Khalq af‘āl al-‘ibād wa-‘l-radd ‘ala ‘l-Jahmīya wa-aṣḥāb al-ta‘fīl*⁹⁸ and Ibn Qutayba’s *Kitāb al-Ikhtilāf fi ‘l-lafz wa-‘l-radd ‘ala ‘l-Jahmīya wa-‘l-mushabbihā*⁹⁹ have survived and been published. As has already been mentioned,¹⁰⁰ ‘Uthmān b. Sa‘īd al-Dārimī, with whom Ibn Abī Ḥātim studied, also wrote a *Kitāb al-Radd ‘ala ‘l-Jahmīya*.¹⁰¹ Short passages from Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s work are quoted in a number of later books.¹⁰² Dhahabī describes the treatise as “a large compilation” (*muṣannaf kabīr*) which demonstrated Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s status as an “*imām*.”¹⁰³

13. *Kitāb al-Tafsīr* (Sezgin, GAS, 1:179, no. 3)

Ibn Kathīr describes the work as “the copious commentary which contained the entire body of transmitted material [and] in which [Ibn Abī Ḥātim] surpasses the commentary of Ṭabarī and all others up to our time.”¹⁰⁴ Sections of this work have been preserved in manuscripts in three Middle Eastern libraries. Part of this commentary has recently been published in two volumes under the title *Tafsīr al-Qur‘ān al-‘azīm musnadan ‘an al-Rasūl wa-‘l-Ṣaḥāba wa-‘l-Tābi‘īn*. The first volume gives the commentary on al-Fātiḥa and al-Baqara

⁹⁷ Ibn Abī Ya‘lā, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:55; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 13:264; id., *Tadhkira*, 3:830; Subkī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 3:325; Kutubī, *Fawāt*, 2:288; Ibn Muflih, *Maqsid*, 2:106; Suyūṭī, *Mufasssīrīn*, 63; Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:280; ‘Ulaymī, *Minhaj*, 2:18; Ḥājī Khalīfa, *Kashf al-zunūn fi asāmī al-kutub wa-‘l-funūn*, ed. Mehmet Şerefettin Yaltkaya, 2 vols. (Istanbul, 1360/1941–1362/1943), 1:col. 838; Riyāḍīzāda, *Asmā’ al-kutub*, ed. Muḥammad al-Tūnjī (Cairo, 1977), 258. In the 1951 edition of Kutubī (2:543) this work is called *Kitāb al-Radd ‘ala ‘l-mujassima*.

⁹⁸ Published in ‘Alī Sāmī al-Nashshār and ‘Ammār al-Ṭālibī, *‘Aqā’id al-salaf* (Alexandria, 1971).

⁹⁹ Ed. Muḥammad Zāhid al-Kawtharī (Cairo, 1349).

¹⁰⁰ See above, p. 21.

¹⁰¹ In his review of Vitestam’s edition of Dārimī’s book, Josef van Ess mentions the titles of some other works in this genre; *Oriens* 13–14 (1960–61):380–81.

¹⁰² E.g. Ibn Abī Ya‘lā, *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:55; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 13:259–60; Ibn Taymīya, *al-Fatwā al-Ḥamawīya al-kubrā* (Cairo, 1387), 33, 35, 36; Ibn Hajar, *Lisān*, 4:446; Ibn Muflih, *Maqsid*, 2:106.

¹⁰³ Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 13:264; id., *Tadhkira*, 3:830.

¹⁰⁴ Ibn Kathīr, *Bidāya*, 11:191.

(verses 1–141) and the second volume covers Āl ʿImrān (verses 1–167). In his brief introduction Ibn Abī Ḥātim explains his motivation for composing the work and the procedure he followed:

A group of my brethren asked me to produce a Qurʾān commentary, summarizing [the reports] with the soundest isnāds, and omitting the [alternate] lines of transmission, the lexicographical illustrations, the variant readings, and the stories and information pertaining to the revelation of the verses. [They requested] that we proceed straightaway to the commentary, stripped of anything else, pursuing the commentary of the verses so that there is not a single word of the Qurʾān for which a commentary exists which I do not cover. I assented to their request. So, I have sought to bring out that work with the reports soundest in regard to isnād and most full in regard to substance. When I found a commentary from the Prophet, I did not mention along with him any of the Companions who said the same thing. When I found [a commentary] from the Companions, if they were in agreement, I cited it from the most exalted of them in stature with the soundest isnād and [then] named those who agreed with them, omitting the isnād. If they disagreed, I cited their disagreement and gave an isnād for each one of them, and named those who agreed with them, omitting the isnāds. If I did not find [a commentary] from the Companions and I found [one] from the Followers, I treated what I found [coming] from them in the same fashion I described in regard to the Companions. Likewise, I did the same in regard to the next generation and those after them.¹⁰⁵

This procedure was in consonance with the philosophy of the critics. As a rule, their Qurʾān commentary was limited to the citation of the ḥadīth touching upon the verses. This was in contrast to the doctrine of the Zāhirites who forbade the use of ḥadīth to explicate the Qurʾān. The assignment of priority first to the Prophet, then to his Companions and finally to the Followers and others was also typical of the critics.

14. *Thawāb al-aʿmāl*

This work has not survived and Samʿānī is the only one to mention it.¹⁰⁶ Judging by its title, it seems to have been a collection of

¹⁰⁵ *Tafsīr al-Qurʾān al-ʿaẓīm*, ed. Aḥmad ʿAbd Allāh al-ʿImārī al-Zahrānī and Ḥikmat Bashīr Yāsīn, 2 vols. (Medina, 1408), 1:9.

¹⁰⁶ *Al-Ansāb*, ed. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Yaḥyā al-Muʿallimī al-Yamānī et al., 12 vols. (Hyderabad, 1382/1962–1404/1984), 4:286. The relevant material was omitted from the 1408/1988 Beirut edition of this work.

reports dealing with the heavenly reward granted for the performance of certain religious acts. Ibn Abī Ḥātim devotes a chapter to the analysis of various defective ḥadīth on this subject in his *ʿIlal al-ḥadīth* (2:172–78). Shīʿite authors especially cultivated this genre.

15. *Zuhd al-thamāniya min al-Tābiʿīn* (Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:179, no. 7)

This treatise, which is preserved in a single manuscript in Maktabat al-Asad (no. 3748, ff. 160a–166a) and has recently been published as a small pamphlet,¹⁰⁷ consists of anecdotes illustrating the asceticism, abstinence and probity of eight members of the second generation of Muslims, namely ʿĀmir b. ʿAbd Allāh, Uways al-Qaranī, Harim b. Ḥayyān, al-Rabīʿ b. Khuthaym, Abū Muslim al-Khawlānī, al-Aswad b. Yazīd, Masrūq b. al-Ajdaʿ and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī. It is difficult to determine Ibn Abī Ḥātim's role in the composition of this work, for all of the reports come from a single transmitter, ʿAlqama b. Marthad (d. 120/738). A number of second/ninth- and third/tenth-century ḥadīth scholars wrote on *zuhd*, including Abū Ḥātim¹⁰⁸ and Abū Zurʿa,¹⁰⁹ both of whom composed works entitled *Kitāb al-Zuhd*. The objections of Ibn Abī Ḥātim's teacher al-Faḍl b. Shādhān to several of the Followers under discussion show that the concept of a group of eight exemplars of *zuhd* was specifically Sunnite.¹¹⁰

16. *An untitled work on dreams and visions*

The same manuscript in Maktabat al-Asad (no. 3748) which contains the only surviving copies of *Aṣl al-sunna* and *Zuhd al-thamāniya* also preserves a few folios (168b–171b) which seem to represent a fragment of a hitherto-undocumented composition of Ibn Abī Ḥātim. The work bears no title and in its present state contains about a dozen reports concerning the communication of spiritual knowledge, especially about the afterlife, through the agency of dreams and visions. As far as can be made out—the manuscript is in very poor condition—all of the reports reached Ibn Abī Ḥātim through

¹⁰⁷ Ed. ʿAbd al-Rahmān b. ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Farwaywāʿī, 2d ed. (Medina, 1408). Yahyā b. Manda calls the work *Kitāb al-Zuhd* and Ibn Ḥajar refers to it as *al-Zuhhād al-thamāniya min kibār al-Tābiʿīn* in *al-Iṣāba fī tamyīz al-Ṣaḥāba*, ed. A. Spenger and Maulawī Abd ul-Hai, 4 vols. (Calcutta, 1854–73), 4:1238.

¹⁰⁸ A portion of this work is preserved in Maktabat al-Asad (no. 3765, ff. 138a–146a) under the title *Min Kitāb al-Zuhd ʿan Abī Ḥātim Muḥammad ibn al-Mundhir al-Hanzalī*.

¹⁰⁹ Ibn Ḥajar, *Iṣāba*, 4:153; Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:145.

¹¹⁰ Quhpāʿī, *Majmaʿ al-rījāl*, ed. ʿAllāma al-Iṣbahānī, 7 vols. (Isfahan, 1384–87), 3:63–64.

Muḥammad b. Yaḥyā b. 'Umar al-Wāsiṭī. Ibn Abī Ḥātim writes (*Jarḥ* 4[1]:125) that this obscure individual had settled in Baghdad and that he and his father studied with him. Presumably this occurred in Baghdad and therefore may be dated to 256/870. The report of his which al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī quotes in *Ta'rikh Baghdād* (3:420) is consistent with the character of the contents of the manuscript.

C. Works on Biography and History

17. *Ādāb al-Shāfi'ī wa-manāqibuhū* (Sezgin, GAS, 1:179, no. 5)

Ibn Abī Ḥātim's biography of the eponym of the Shāfi'ite law school is preserved in a single manuscript in Maktabat al-Asad (no. 13950). The work is a pleasant compendium of reports, many of which he collected during his sojourn in Egypt in 262/875 directly from the *imām's* surviving students. This immediacy accounts for the unusual vividness which characterizes the work. The contents are extremely varied, including information on Shāfi'ī's life and theological doctrines, as well as reports illustrating his expertise in the Arabic language and his generosity. The book also preserves three adabistic treatises ascribed to him, one on the terms for headwounds (pp. 238–41), another on the names applied to camels at the various stages of their lifecycle (pp. 242–46) and the last on the genealogy of the Quraysh and Hashimites (pp. 246–70).¹¹¹ This is the earliest surviving biography of Shāfi'ī and is quoted frequently in later accounts of his life.

18. *Kitāb Makka*

The evidence that this work ever existed is slender. Sakhāwī is the only one to mention it,¹¹² listing it as one of the histories of Mecca in *I'lān*. This implies that the work dealt with ḥadīth transmitters who had some connection with the holy city, either having lived or visited there. Just before this, Sakhāwī lists Ibn Abī Ḥātim's name under the heading of those who wrote works on the special characteristics (*faḍā'il*) of Mecca. This would be a collection of reports indicating the merits of Mecca and its superiority to all other cities.

¹¹¹ The work on headwounds would seem to be *Kitāb al-Shujā'j* and the work on camels a portion of *Kitāb Alwān al-ibil wa-'l-ghanam wa-ṣifātihā wa-asnānihā*, both of which Ibn 'Abd al-Barr ascribes to Shāfi'ī in *al-Intiqā' fī faḍā'il al-thalātha al-a'imma al-fuqahā' Mālik wa-'l-Shāfi'ī wa-Abī Ḥanīfa* (Cairo, 1350), 109.

¹¹² Sakhāwī, *I'lān*, 281; trans. F. Rosenthal, *History*, 480–81.

Here he gives Ibn Abī Ḥātim the *kunya* "Abu 'l-Faraj" instead of "Abū Muḥammad." It is impossible to tell whether both references are to the same work or to two separate works. The confusion over the *kunya* is also puzzling. It may be that Sakhāwī is referring to a different Ibn Abī Ḥātim. On the other hand, it would not have been unusual for a scholar of Ibn Abī Ḥātim's inclinations to have composed either a history of the scholars of Mecca or a work praising the city.

19. *Manāqib Aḥmad*

In addition to his work on Shāfi'ī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim wrote a work on Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. The title *Manāqib Aḥmad* is given by Dāwūdī,¹¹³ while the historian of the Ḥanbalites Ibn Abī Ya'ālā and those dependent on him refer to the work as *Faḍā'il imāminā Aḥmad*.¹¹⁴ Sakhāwī in *al-Jawāhir wa-'l-durar*¹¹⁵ and Ibn Rajab in *Sharḥ 'Ilal al-Tirmidhī* (p. 181) mention that Ibn Abī Ḥātim wrote a book on Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, but do not provide a specific title. The work itself has not survived, although it was most likely a counterpart to his work on Shāfi'ī.

¹¹³ Dāwūdī, *Ṭabaqāt*, 1:280.

¹¹⁴ *Ṭabaqāt*, 2:55; Ibn Muflīḥ, *Maqṣid*, 2:106 (*Faḍā'il Aḥmad*); 'Ulaymī, *Minhaj*, 2:18.

¹¹⁵ In F. Rosenthal, *History*, 594.

CHAPTER THREE

THE *TAQDIMA*

In the *Taqdima*, Ibn Abī Ḥātim justifies the employment of ḥadīth criticism in his own day on basis of the precedent set by prestigious Hijāzian scholars of earlier generations. He links these early authorities to his contemporaries by means of a genealogy illustrating the passage of ḥadīth criticism from one generation to the next. To make the case that these early scholars were critics of ḥadīth, he cites and arranges a wide variety of transmitted material in a framework determined by his conception of the history of ḥadīth transmission.

I. *The Aim of the Taqdima*

Most third/ninth and fourth/tenth century works on ḥadīth criticism are prefaced by introductions which typically have both technical and polemical aspects. The technical matters usually involve the definition of terms and explanation of procedures, those things which another student would care to know about. On polemical side are the defenses and justifications of ḥadīth criticism aimed at the attacks of the *ahl al-ra'y* and *ahl al-kalām*. Ibn Abī Ḥātim's *Kitāb al-Ḥarḥ wa-'l-ta'dīl* is unusual in that it has two separate introductions. There is an introductory section directly attached to it which runs to thirty-eight pages in the printed text and is wholly typical of the genre, as it touches upon both technical and polemical issues. In addition, the title of the separate volume *Taqdimat al-ma'rifa li-Kitāb al-Ḥarḥ wa-'l-ta'dīl*, or "Introduction to *Kitāb al-Ḥarḥ wa-'l-ta'dīl*," clearly indicates that it too was conceived as an introduction to *Ḥarḥ*, and it is almost entirely polemical in character.

In the *Taqdima* Ibn Abī Ḥātim constructs a genealogy which connects ḥadīth criticism to prestigious scholars from earlier generations. Although the *Taqdima* addresses the objections of the *ahl al-ra'y* and *ahl al-kalām*, its author was preaching to the choir. Associating ḥadīth criticism with the likes of Mālik and Sufyān b. 'Uyayna, as is done in the *Taqdima*, would mean little outside of Hijāzian circles. Ibn Abī Ḥātim targets those Hijāzian scholars whose faith may have been

undermined by the Kūfans. He does not offer a point by point refutation of the Kūfans, but a blanket affirmation of the legitimacy and validity of ḥadīth criticism. His reassuring message is that ḥadīth criticism is firmly based in the practice of their famous Hījāzian forebears.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim chose the form of the *ṭabaqāt*-work as most suited to his polemical purpose. The *ṭabaqa* is an indigenous Arabic historiographical expression in which noteworthy individuals are arranged by generation.¹ The span of each generation is roughly fixed by student-teacher relationships, with the members of one generation being the teachers of the next.² By its nature, such a scheme does not yield a strict chronology but rather an approximate and relative one. The *ṭabaqāt*-work is like the isnād in that it illustrates the passage of knowledge from one generation to the next; but whereas the isnād serves this purpose for a single text, the *ṭabaqāt*-work does so for an entire body of doctrine. The *Taqdima* purports to be the record of the transmission of the method of ḥadīth criticism from its first practitioners to Abū Ḥātim and Abū Zur'a, Ibn Abī Ḥātim's principal mentors and his main sources for the technical judgements in *Jarh*. In fact, what Ibn Abī Ḥātim does is anachronistically project the critical technique of his contemporaries back three generations to scholars unacquainted with it, in order to provide prestigious precedents for its usage. Ibn Abī Ḥātim was not the only scholar to attempt to justify ḥadīth criticism on basis of its usage by earlier scholars, but the *Taqdima* is the most ambitiously conceived and elaborately executed work of this kind.

II. *The Composition of the Taqdima*

The success of Ibn Abī Ḥātim's genealogy hinges on his making a plausible case that the eighteen scholars who form his four *ṭabaqas* were critics. The amount of space devoted to each critic varies greatly,

¹ For general discussions of *ṭabaqāt*, see Otto Loth, "Ursprung und Bedeutung der Ṭabaqāt," *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 23 (1869):593-614; *EI Suppl.*, s.v. Ṭabaqāt, by W. Heffening; Franz Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 93-95; Ibrahim Hafsī, "Recherches sur le genre 'Ṭabaqāt' dans la littérature arabe," *Arabica* 23 (1976):227-65, 24 (1977):1-41, 150-86; Wadad Kadi, "Biographical Dictionaries: Inner Structure and Cultural Significance," in George N. Atiyeh (ed.), *The Book in the Islamic World*, 93-122.

² Ibn Hibbān discusses his use of this principle in *Kitāb al-Thiqāt* (Hyderabad, 1973ff.), 9:293-97.

with more generally allotted to the early ones. This correlates with the difficulty involved in making the case for the earlier scholars' status as critics. Everyone knew that 'Alī b. al-Madīnī was a critic of ḥadīth, so Ibn Abī Ḥātim gives him only a page and a half. The notion that Mālik was a critic must have astounded many people—since he certainly was not—and we find that Ibn Abī Ḥātim has to devote thirty-five pages to marshalling evidence that he was one.³ The exceptions to this general pattern are the later critics, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Abū Zur'a and Abū Ḥātim. By giving them more extensive entries, Ibn Abī Ḥātim sought to fix them firmly in the genealogy he had established as the three most prominent exponents of ḥadīth criticism in the third/ninth century.

In these chapters Ibn Abī Ḥātim almost entirely restricts himself to the citation of transmitted reports with their isnāds. For the purpose of analysis, we can divide this material into three types which will be examined in the following chapters, testimonial, biographical and documentary. In restricting himself to the citation of material handed down from earlier times, Ibn Abī Ḥātim exhibits the preference of the critics for relying on past authorities. It may appear that by adopting this approach, an author sacrificed a good deal of creative freedom and yoked himself to an excessively clumsy mode of expression. This was true to a degree, but less so than it would perhaps appear at first glance, since the literary tradition from which Ibn Abī Ḥātim drew his reports was exceptionally rich and varied. Furthermore, because these short reports were shorn of any context, there was little to restrict the interpretation of them.⁴ By his selection and arrangement, he provided a context of his own design and thereby influenced the reader's interpretation.

The greatest threat facing the author of a work like the *Taqdima* was that readers would not recognize the role which he intended a particular report to play in his argument. Ibn Abī Ḥātim succeeded in overcoming this obstacle by a number of devices, all of which had already been employed in the composition of the great ḥadīth collections. Of these, the most useful and systematically applied is

³ For an explicit enunciation of this principle by a compiler of a book of *ṭabaqāt*, see al-Qādī 'Abd al-Jabbār, *Faḍl al-ī'tizāl*, 228.

⁴ For remarks on this, see Marshall Hodgson, *The Venture of Islam*, 3 vols. (Chicago, 1974), 1:352–57 and Patrica Crone, *Slaves on Horses: The Evolution of the Islamic Polity* (Cambridge, 1980), 5.

the grouping of reports under section titles to signal the desired interpretation.⁵ The title appries the reader of what to look for when he encounters the report. To restrict ourselves to a single illustration of the utility of the sectional titles, we may cite the report in which Abū Zur‘a says that he was once asked to put some salt in a stew and he then added so much that the dish could no longer be eaten (pp. 348–49). Without help, we would be lucky to divine the reason this report was included in the *Taqdima*. Fortunately, we are rescued by the heading stating that this report was meant to show the high-minded scholar’s obliviousness to worldly matters.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim sometimes employs commentary to make his point. On whole his commentary is quite limited, usually only a few words, and he resorts to it in only the most baffling situations. As an example of the ḥadīth criticism of Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna, he gives the following report from Dhu’ayb b. ‘Amr al-Sahmī al-Madīnī:

I asked Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna, “Did you hear anything from Ṣāliḥ [b. Nabḥān], the client of al-Taw’ama [bint Umayya b. Khalaf al-Qurashī]?” He said, “Yes, this and this and this. . . .” He gestured with his hand—meaning that he did it a lot. [Sufyān said,] “I studied with him while his saliva was running [down his chin]”—that is, from old age—“I do not know any of our colleagues who transmits from him, not Mālik b. Anas nor anyone else.” (*Taqdima*, 35)

Ibn Abī Ḥātim explains, “So it became clear that Ibn ‘Uyayna was critical (*muntaqid*) of the transmitters of reports, for I do not know that he transmitted anything from Ṣāliḥ, the client of al-Taw’ama.” In other words, we know that Ibn ‘Uyayna made a critical decision to reject Ṣāliḥ because he did not transmit any of his ḥadīth, although he had collected them. Without the crucial bit of information, it would by no means be clear that this report indicated that Ibn ‘Uyayna practiced ḥadīth criticism.

Abridgement is the third of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s basic techniques for making himself understood. Although it may seem rather cavalier, scholars of this era also abridged the ḥadīth of the Prophet. Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī describes the composition of his *Sunan*,

Sometimes I abridged the long ḥadīth because, if I had recorded them at length, some of those who heard them would not recognize nor

⁵ The use of chapter headings by Bukhārī is discussed in Goldziher, *Zāhiriten*, 103–4; trans. *Zāhirīs*, 97–98 and Rosenthal, *Knowledge Triumphant*, 83.

understand the legal issue addressed in them. For that reason, I abridged them.⁶

On occasion, Ibn Abī Ḥātim prunes the unessential and distracting elements from a long report in order to clarify its message. Abridgement is most easily recognizable in the cases where he cites both the original and the shortened version of the report. (No doubt he also shortened other reports; however, without knowing the exact form in which a given report reached him, it is impossible to determine which.) We find a clear example of abridgement at the beginning of the chapter on Abū Zur'a, where Ibn Abī Ḥātim records the text of a letter Ishāq b. Rāhawayh wrote to Abū Zur'a. Later, in the section of the chapter devoted to demonstrating the exalted stature of Abū Zur'a in the eyes of other scholars, he cites a passage taken from this letter to show Ibn Rāhawayh's esteem for Abū Zur'a.⁷

Ibn Abī Ḥātim appears to have been extremely conscientious in the citation of transmitted material, even in cases where he did not entirely agree with the sentiments expressed. In one version of the story of Sufyān al-Thawrī's interview with the caliph al-Mahdī, the pious man utters words which betray his alarm and fear, at which point Ibn Abī Ḥātim confesses his frustration: "I would rather that he said something other than that, that is, something about trusting in God or the like" (p. 106). Needless to say, his interpretations of the reports are not always convincing. More than anything else, perhaps, his failures in this regard speak to his essential honesty in the reproduction of the material he cites, for, if he had desired, he certainly could have altered many of the reports to fit his requirements better.

III. *The Form of the Taqdimā*

Ibn Abī Ḥātim structured the *Taqdimā* in accordance with his conception of the history of ḥadīth scholarship, and in the introductory section of the work he gives a synopsis of this history. Two models

⁶ Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Risālat Abī Dāwūd ilā ahl Makka fī wasf Sunanihī*, ed. Muḥammad al-Sabbāgh (n.p., n.d.), 24. See also Franz Rosenthal, *Technique*, 45.

⁷ *Taqdimā*, 329, 344. A passage from the letter is also cited on p. 342 and is misquoted. It should be noted that Ibn Abī Ḥātim does not attribute this passage directly to the letter, but rather to Abū Zur'a. He seems to have faithfully recorded Abū Zur'a's faulty recollection of the text of the letter.

of the disposition of the knowledge of the Prophet after his death were current in early Hijāzian circles. These models, which may be called the Medinese and the diffusionist, were put into juxtaposition in the famous epistolary exchange between Mālik and al-Layth b. Sa'd.⁸ Mālik advocated the Medinese model, asserting that the knowledge of the Prophet was embodied in the ḥadīth and practice of the people of Medina. Muḥammad lived the last years of his life in Medina and it was therefore felt that the residents of this city were in the best position to know his teachings. This thinking informs Mālik's *Muwatta'*, a digest of Medinese legal thought and practice. Al-Layth b. Sa'd maintained that the doctrines of the Prophet were dispersed throughout the Islamic world by the migrations of his Companions during the conquests. This was the model adopted by Ibn Abī Ḥātim and the other scholars of ḥadīth. They respected Medina as the home of the Prophet, but in practice gave no special priority to the ḥadīth emanating from any particular locale.⁹

Ibn Abī Ḥātim writes that God sent Muḥammad as His messenger to all people. It was he whom God made the recipient of the Qur'ān, and it was he whom God made the source of explanation for the Holy Book.

[The Prophet] remained in Mecca and Medina for twenty-three years, setting up the lineaments of right religion for the people, imposing the precepts, establishing the *sunna*, executing the rulings, forbidding the forbidden, permitting the permissible and setting the people on path of truth by word and deed. This he continued to do until his death. (*Taqdima*, 2)

The work of the Prophet was continued by his Companions and God made them models for mankind. They preserved all that had been vouchsafed them by the Prophet and he enjoined them to pass this legacy on to others. The Muslim conquests dispersed the Companions throughout the Near East.

⁸ Yahyā b. Ma'īn, *Ta'rikh*, 4:487–501; Fasawī, *Ma'rifa*, 1:687–97. Discussions of these letters are to be found in Robert Brunschvig, "Polémiques médiévales autour du rite de Mālik," *Al-Andalus* 15 (1950):379–87; 'Abd al-Ḥalīm Maḥmūd, *al-Layth ibn Sa'd* (Cairo, 1977), 74–93; Raif Georges Khoury, "Al-Layth ibn Sa'd (94/713–175/791), grand maître et mécène de l'Égypte, vu à travers quelques documents islamiques anciens," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 40 (1981):189–202.

⁹ See I. Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, 2:178; *Muslim Studies*, 2:166.

Then the Companions were dispersed to the various regions, cities and military strongholds by the conquests of foreign lands, military expeditions, and by appointment to governorships, judgeships and other legal positions. Every one of them disseminated in his region or town what he had learned and preserved from the Messenger of God. They ruled with the ruling of God and carried out matters according to what the Messenger of God established as the *sunna*. They gave the legal decisions which they were asked for on basis of what they knew about the Messenger of God's answers to similar questions. Together with first possessing good intention and proximity to God, they gave themselves over entirely to teaching the people the prescriptions, the rules, the *sunnas*, the forbidden and the permitted, until they died. (*Taqdima*, 8)

In their new homes the Companions continued to practice and teach the *sunna* of the Prophet. The Followers walked in the footsteps of the Companions, preserving and further disseminating the *sunna*.¹⁰

Two phenomena characterize the generations following the Companions and Followers. The ḥadīth transmissions of the first two generations of Muslims had been flawless. After their demise, however, errors out of negligence and forgeries as the result of sinfulness began to appear in the ḥadīth canon. This occasioned the appearance of ḥadīth critics.¹¹ In *Ḥaṣṣ*, Ibn Abī Ḥātim quotes the famous report in

¹⁰ For a different interpretation of these passages, see Brannon Wheeler, *Applying the Canon in Islam: The Authorization and Maintenance of Interpretive Reasoning in Hanafi Scholarship* (Albany, 1996), 82–91.

¹¹ Ibn Abī Ḥātim calls the critics "*al-ʿulamāʾ al-jahābidha al-nuqqād*." The first of these terms does not require much comment. "*ʿAlīm*" (pl. *ʿulamāʾ*) is the common word for "scholar" or "one who possesses knowledge (*ʿilm*).¹² The scholars of ḥadīth frequently use "*ʿilm*" as a synonym for "ḥadīth." The second word "*jahbadh*" (pl. *jahābidha*) is a loan word from Persian. In the Muslim era the term "*jahbadh*" was applied to mint officials, moneychangers and taxcollectors. At this time the value of a coin was purely intrinsic and the principal task of anyone who handled money was the detection of coins of inferior weight and purity. Hence, the word also acquired the more general sense of "someone able to distinguish quickly the good from the bad" as a skilled moneychanger distinguishes between good and bad coins. The third term, "*nāqid*" (pl. *nuqqād*), is semantically very similar to "*jahbadh*." It means "moneychanger" or "someone able to distinguish good coin from bad." It, too, became more generalized, acquiring the sense of "someone who can distinguish the good from the bad." In modern Arabic, "*nāqid*" has come to mean a "critic," for instance, in a field of artistic endeavor. In describing their activity, the critics of ḥadīth regularly likened themselves to moneychangers; e.g. *Ḥaṣṣ*, 1(1):17, 18, 21; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *al-Kifāya fī ʿilm al-riwāya* (Hyderabad, 1357), 395, 431; id., *Al-Jāmiʿ li-akhlāq al-rāwī wa-ādāb al-sāmiʿ*, ed. Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Ṣalāḥ b. Muḥammad b. ʿUwayḍa (Beirut, 1417/1996), 398–99; Bayhaqī, *Maʿrifat al-sunan*, 1:56–57; Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ*, 536.

which Ibn Sīrīn (33/653–110/729)¹² asserts that the necessity of examining transmitters did not arise until the *fitna*, or “strife.”

They did not use to ask about the isnād [of a ḥadīth]. When the *fitna* took place, they asked about it. They used to look at the adherents of the *sunna* (*ahl al-sunna*) and their ḥadīth were accepted, and at the people of innovators (*ahl al-bidʿa*) and their ḥadīth were rejected.¹³

Which “*fitna*” is meant here has never been resolved, although modern-day scholars have expended a considerable amount of effort on question.¹⁴ A couple of other reports are less ambiguous. One in the *Taqdima* ascribed to Mālik makes Zuhri (ca. 50/670–124/742)¹⁵ the first scholar who gave isnāds with his ḥadīth.¹⁶ Rāmahurmuzī in *al-Muḥaddith al-fāṣil* (p. 208) quotes the declaration of Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān that Shaʿbī (16/640–103/721) was the first to examine isnāds.¹⁷

The critics included in the *Taqdima* span a period of about a century and a half, the earliest being the Syrian Awzāʿī (ca. 88/707–157/774) and the latest Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s father, Abū Ḥātim (d. 277/890). Ibn Abī Ḥātim names each of eighteen critics in full and indicates the geographical area of his activity, but does not give either birthdates or deathdates. The critics are categorized into four *ṭabaqas*.

¹² Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:633–34.

¹³ *Jarh*, 1(1):28; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 8 vols. (Cairo, 1330–34), 1:11; ‘Uqaylī, *Kitāb al-Duʿafā’ al-kabīr*, ed. ‘Abd al-Muʿṭī Amīn Qalʿajī, 4 vols. (Beirut, 1404/1984), 1:10; Tirmidhī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Tirmidhī (bi-sharḥ al-imām Ibn al-ʿArabī al-Mālikī)*, 13 vols. (Cairo, 1350/1931–1352/1934), 13:307; Jūzajānī, *Aḥwāl al-rjāl*, ed. Subḥī al-Badrī al-Sāmarrāʾī (Beirut, 1985), 36; Ibn ‘Adī, *Kāmil*, 1:130; Ibn Hibbān, *Majrūḥīn*, 1:82; Rāmahurmuzī, *al-Muḥaddith al-fāṣil*, 209; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kifāya*, 122. Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn’s remarks on the authenticity of the report are included in his *Taʾrīkh*, 3:431.

¹⁴ M.M. Azami, opting for the earliest possible date, maintains that the “*fitna*” in question is the assassination of ‘Uthmān in 35/656; *Studies in Early Hadith Literature* (Indianapolis, 1978), 216–17. Joseph Schacht, viewing the report as anachronistic, feels that it refers to the killing of the Umayyad caliph Walīd II in 126/744; *Origins*, 36–37. James Robson settled on the uprising of ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Zubayr in the years 64/683 to 72/691; “The Isnād in Muslim Tradition,” *Glasgow University Oriental Society: Transactions* 15 (1953–54):21–22. G.H.A. Juynboll follows Robson in “The Date of the Great *Fitna*,” *Arabica* 20 (1973):142–59; *Muslim Tradition*, 17–18; “Muslim’s Introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ*: Translated and Annotated with an Excursus on the Chronology of *Fitna* and *Bidʿa*,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 5 (1984):303–8.

¹⁵ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:280–83.

¹⁶ The report reads, “*awwal man asnada ʿl-ḥadīth Ibn Shihāb*,” *Taqdima*, 20. Cf. G.H.A. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, 18–19.

¹⁷ Cf. Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *al-Tamhīd li-mā fi ʿl-Muwattaʾ min al-maʿānī wa-ʿl-asānīd*, ed. Muṣṭafā b. Aḥmad al-ʿAlawī and Muḥammad ‘Abd al-Karīm al-Bakrī ([Rabat], 1387/1967ff.) 1:55.

THE CRITICS IN THE TAQDIMA

The First *Ṭabaqa*:

- Medina* – Mālik b. Anas [d. 179/795]
Mecca – Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna [d. 196/811]
al-Kūfa – Sufyān al-Thawrī [d. 161/778]
al-Baṣra – Shu‘ba b. al-Ḥajjāj [d. 160/776]
 – Hammād b. Zayd [d. 179/795]
Damascus – Awzā‘ī [d. 157/774]

The Second *Ṭabaqa*:

- al-Kūfa* – Wakī‘ b. al-Jarrāḥ [d. 197/812]
al-Baṣra – Yahyā b. Sa‘īd al-Qaṭṭān [d. 198/813]
 – ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Mahdī [d. 198/813]
Marw – ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Mubārak [d. 181/797]
Damascus – Abū Ishāq al-Fazārī [d. 188/804]
 – Abū Mushir [d. 218/833]

The Third *Ṭabaqa*:

- Baghdād* – Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal [d. 241/855]
 – Yahyā b. Ma‘īn [d. 233/847]
al-Baṣra – ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī [d. 234/849]
al-Kūfa – Ibn Numayr [d. 234/848]

The Fourth *Ṭabaqa*:

- al-Rayy* – Abū Zur‘a [d. 264/878]
 – Abū Ḥātim [d. 277/890]

Nowhere does Ibn Abī Ḥātim explicitly delineate the criteria he employed in selecting the scholars for the *Taqdima*. A couple of general observations, however, can be ventured. The first is that all of the scholars he includes were recognized as prominent transmitters of ḥadīth. The second is that the selection of critics reflects his belief that the transmission of ḥadīth started as isolated local traditions and later became a single universal tradition. These two points are put into relief by the comparison of Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s critics with the list of transmitters ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī supplies in his *‘Ilal* (pp. 36–40). Ibn al-Madīnī’s aim in composing such a list was to provide a schematic picture of the passing of ḥadīth from one generation to the next. He gives the transmitter’s name, *kunya*, deathdate, and, often, tribal affiliation, and in some cases he adds other brief remarks. Ibn al-Madīnī’s list consists of three levels, the first two of which are further broken down by geographical region. His first level is that of the later Followers. The second and third levels correspond to Ibn

Abī Ḥātim's first and second *ṭabaqas*, respectively. Ibn Abī Ḥātim was familiar with this list and refers to it frequently in the *Taqdima*.

TRANSMITTERS OF
‘ALĪ B. AL-MADĪNĪ

CRITICS OF IBN ABĪ ḤĀTIM'S
TAQDIMA

The *Isnād* Revolves around

- 1) *Medina* – Zuhri (d. 124/741)
- 2) *Mecca* – ‘Amr b. Dīnār
(d. 126/743)
- 3) *al-Baṣra* – Qatāda b. Dī‘āma
(d. 117/735)
- 4) – Yaḥyā b. Abī Kathīr
(d. 132/749)
- 5) *al-Kūfa* – Abū Ishāq (d. 129/746)
- 6) – Sulaymān b. Mihrān
(d. 148/765)

Those who Composed Books

The First *Ṭabaqa*

- | | | |
|---------------------|---------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| 1) <i>Medina</i> | – Mālik b. Anas
(d. 179/795) | Mālik b. Anas |
| 2) | – Muḥammad b. Ishāq
(d. 152/769) | |
| 3) <i>Mecca</i> | – Ibn Jurayj
(d. 151/768) | |
| 4) | – Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna
(d. 198/813) | Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna |
| 5) <i>al-Baṣra</i> | – Sa‘īd b. Abī ‘Arūba
(d. 158/774) | |
| 6) | – Ḥammād b. Salama
(d. 168/784) | |
| 7) | – Abū ‘Awāna
(d. 175/791) | |
| 8) | – Shu‘ba b. al-Ḥajjāj
(d. 160/776) | Shu‘ba b. al-Ḥajjāj |
| 9) | – Ma‘mar b. Rāshid
(d. 154/770) | |
| 10) <i>al-Kūfa</i> | – Sufyān al-Thawrī
(d. 161/778) | Ḥammād b. Zayd
Sufyān al-Thawrī |
| 11) <i>Damascus</i> | – Awzā‘ī (d. 151/768) | Awzā‘ī |
| 12) <i>Wāsiṭ</i> | – Hushaym b. Bashīr
(d. 183/799) | |

Their Knowledge went to

- 1) Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān
(d. 198/813)
- 2) Yaḥyā b. Abī Zāʿida (d. 182/798)
- 3) Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ (d. 199/814)
- 4) ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak
(d. 181/797)
- 5) ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī
(d. 198/813)
- 6) Yaḥyā b. Ādam (d. 203/818)

The Second *Ṭabaqa*

- Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān
(al-Baṣra)
- Wakīʿ b. al-Jarrāḥ (al-Kūfa)
ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Mubārak
(Marw)
ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī
(al-Baṣra)
- Abū Ishāq al-Fazārī (Damascus)
Abū Mushir (Damascus)

The Third *Ṭabaqa*

- Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (Baghdad)
Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn (Baghdad)
ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī (al-Baṣra)
Ibn Numayr (al-Kūfa)

The Fourth *Ṭabaqa*

- Abū Zurʿa (al-Rayy)
Abū Ḥātim (al-Rayy)

Note: The dates are those given by ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī.

The critics in Ibn Abī Ḥātim's first *ṭabaqa* seem to represent the most important transmitters in their respective local traditions. The Companions were dispersed throughout the Near East as a result of the Muslim conquests, taking their ḥadīth with them. These they passed on to the scholars of their region and for some time their teachings remained in isolation as local traditions, which persisted through the time of Ibn Abī Ḥātim's first generation of critics. All of Ibn Abī Ḥātim's critics are found in Ibn al-Madīnī's list with the exception of Ḥammād b. Zayd (d. 179/795). Ibn al-Madīnī's omission of him is perhaps more difficult to account for than Ibn Abī Ḥātim's inclusion, for Ḥammād was a highly esteemed figure. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī, for instance, in an oft-quoted passage names him the *imām* of his age in al-Baṣra.¹⁸

¹⁸ *Taqdima*, 11.

Geography plays a much less important role in the composition of Ibn Abī Ḥātim's second *ṭabaqa*. It should be noted that Ibn al-Madīnī does not mention localities of these scholars at all. This reflects the dispersal of the independent local traditions and the beginning of the formation a single universal tradition. The agents of this dispersal were the travelling scholars of ḥadīth. It may be mentioned that Ibn Abī Ḥātim's second *ṭabaqa* corresponds to Rāmahurmuzī's first *ṭabaqa* of scholars who travelled to collect ḥadīth in *al-Muḥaddith al-fāsil* (p. 229). There is a high degree of correspondence between Ibn Abī Ḥātim's second *ṭabaqa* and Ibn al-Madīnī's third, the exceptions being Ibn Abī Ḥātim's inclusion of the two Damascene scholars, Abū Ishāq al-Fazārī (d. 188/804)¹⁹ and Abū Mushir (140/757–218/833).²⁰ Whether this means that Ibn Abī Ḥātim felt that the local Damascene tradition persisted in isolation longer than any of the others is unclear. It may be nothing more than an idiosyncratic reflection of the comparatively extensive studies Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his father undertook in Syria.

In the third and fourth *ṭabaqas* regionalism ceases to have any importance. Ibn Abī Ḥātim's third *ṭabaqa* consists of four scholars. We possess works of three of these, namely Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn and Ibn al-Madīnī, which demonstrate their conspicuous merit as critics. In this regard the inclusion of Ibn Numayr (d. 234/848) may seem somewhat peculiar, for he is far less famous than the other three. However, Ibn Abī Ḥātim devotes about seven pages to the citation of examples of his critical pronouncements, demonstrating that, whatever his reputation, he was an active critic. The fourth and final *ṭabaqa* consists only of Ibn Abī Ḥātim's two mentors, his father Abū Ḥātim and Abū Zurʿa, the principal sources of the critical pronouncements in *Farḥ*.

¹⁹ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:292.

²⁰ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:100–1.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE TESTIMONIAL EVIDENCE

Having examined the basic format into which Ibn Abī Ḥātim cast the *Taqdima*, we are now prepared to look at the material he used to establish his genealogy of ḥadīth criticism. As was noted above, the success of his enterprise hinges on his being able to make the case that certain prestigious personalities from the early history of Islam were critics of ḥadīth. The material he cites consists entirely of transmitted reports, which, although extremely varied in nature, all share the characteristic of representing these individuals as critics. This chapter will examine some of the reports which may be described as testimonial in nature.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim's main proof for the assertion that God has bestowed upon certain individuals the status of ḥadīth critic is the consensus of the learned within the Muslim community.¹ With this in mind, he supplies a great number of testimonials from various personages to the effect that the scholars treated in the *Taqdima* were critics of ḥadīth. Many of these testimonials take the form of straightforward declarations along the lines of "So and so was an authority in ḥadīth." For instance, we read that Ḥayyā b. Sa'īd al-Qaṭṭān declared, "Mālik was an *imām* in ḥadīth."² They are usually placed at the beginning of each critic's chapter under the heading "What is said about the knowledge and understanding of. . . ."

Although most of those whose testimony Ibn Abī Ḥātim records were traditionally recognized as "Ḥijāzians," in the introductory section of the *Taqdima* he also amasses evidence that some of the *ahl al-ra'y* were in agreement with his proposition.

If it is said, "You mentioned the unanimity of the scholars in acknowledging their [status as critics]. Yet, you know of the divergence and disagreement in method between the scholars of al-Kūfa and those of the Hejaz. Did Abū Ḥanīfa, Abū Yūsuf and Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan

¹ *Taqdima*, 3.

² *Taqdima*, 14.

agree with the group of scholars you mentioned in bearing witness to the integrity of those discriminating critics, or do we [not] find that with them?" (*Taqdima*, 3)

Ibn Abī Ḥātim assures us that the early Kūfans did acknowledge the first ḥadīth critics. The three scholars concerned here, Abū Ḥanīfa and his two most prominent students, Abū Yūsuf (113/731–182/798)³ and Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Shaybānī (132/749–189/805),⁴ were considered the founders of what would become known as the Ḥanafite law school and as such were scholars of considerable prestige in establishment circles.

The first Kūfan testimonial is based on a report from Sufyān al-Thawrī. Here Sufyān asserts his own superiority over Abū Ḥanīfa:

I did not ask Abū Ḥanīfa about anything. He used to come to me and ask me about things. (*Taqdima*, 3)

Ibn Abī Ḥātim comments on this brief report: "Since the image of Thawrī in the mind of [Abū Ḥanīfa] was such that he flew to him to ask about what he did not understand, it is clear proof that [Sufyān al-Thawrī] satisfied him as an authority for himself and for others."⁵ According to Ibn Abī Ḥātim, by consulting Sufyān al-Thawrī, Abū Ḥanīfa conceded his superiority. Of course, there is no mention at all of ḥadīth or criticism in this report, but Ibn Abī Ḥātim tends to read everything as a reference to ḥadīth in the absence of positive indications to the contrary.

In another report Ibrāhīm b. Ṭahmān (d. 163/779) describes Abū Ḥanīfa's eagerness to study the ḥadīth of Mālik.

I went to Medina and there I wrote ḥadīth. Then I travelled to al-Kūfa and went to Abū Ḥanīfa at his house. I greeted him and he said, "With whom did you study there?" I gave him their names. He said, "Did you write any ḥadīth from Mālik b. Anas?" I said yes. He said, "Bring me what you wrote from him." So I brought it and he called for papyrus and an inkwell and I began to dictate while he wrote. (*Taqdima*, 3–4)

Ibn Abī Ḥātim finds a confession of Mālik's superiority in this report: "Abū Ḥanīfa would not have written from Ibrāhīm b. Ṭahmān from Mālik b. Anas while Mālik was alive, unless he was satisfied with

³ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:419–21.

⁴ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:421–33.

⁵ *Taqdima*, 3.

[Mālik] and regarded him as reliable, especially since he designated Mālik b. Anas from among all of those whom [Ibrāhīm b. Ṭahmān] studied with in Medina and asked him to dictate his ḥadīth to him. [Thus,] he made him an authority (*imām*) for himself and for others.”⁶

In another report, the Egyptian scholar Muḥammad b. ‘Abd al-Ḥakam records Shāfi‘ī’s account of a conversation he had with Shaybānī over the relative merits of Mālik and Abū Ḥanīfa.

Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan [al-Shaybānī] said to me, “Who is more knowledgeable, our teacher or your teacher?”—that is Abū Ḥanīfa and Mālik. I said, “Truthfully?” He said yes. I said, “I adjure you by God, who is more knowledgeable in the Qur’ān, our teacher or your teacher?” He said, “Your teacher,”—that is Mālik. I said, “Who is more knowledgeable in the *sunna*, our teacher or your teacher?” He said, “By God, your teacher.” I said, “I adjure you by God, who is more knowledgeable in the views of the Companions and the other early Muslims, our teacher or your teacher?” He said, “Your teacher.” I said, “Nothing remains but analogical reasoning (*qiyās*) and it is based upon these things. On what does someone who does not know the sources base his analogies?”⁷

This particular report is also recorded in the chapter in the *Taqdima* on Mālik and appears twice in *Ādāb al-Shāfi‘ī*, once to illustrate Shāfi‘ī’s respect for Mālik and another time as an example of a scholarly dispute between Shāfi‘ī and Shaybānī.⁸ *Ādāb al-Shāfi‘ī* also preserves an alternate version of this same report. This version, which is recounted by another pupil of Shāfi‘ī, Yūnus b. ‘Abd al-A‘lā (d. 264/877), has Shāfi‘ī debating whether it should have been Mālik or Abū Ḥanīfa who enjoyed the privilege of issuing legal opinions. The argument here also revolves around the question of comparative expertise in four areas, in this case, the Qur’ān, ḥadīth, the differences of opinion of the Companions and the use of reason. Shaybānī is made to concede Mālik’s superiority in the first three domains. Shāfi‘ī acknowledges that Abū Ḥanīfa was “superior in the use of reason” (*a‘qal*), but argues that Mālik’s three superiorities outweigh Abū Ḥanīfa’s one.⁹

⁶ *Taqdima*, 4.

⁷ *Taqdima*, 4, 12–13; Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilyat al-awliyā’ wa-ṭabaqāt al-asfiyā’*, 10 vols. (Cairo, 1351/1932–1357/1938), 6:329; Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Intiqā’*, 24. Goldziher translates this passage in *Ẓāhirīten*, 25; trans. *Ẓāhirīs*, 25.

⁸ *Taqdima*, 12–13; *Ādāb al-Shāfi‘ī*, 159–60, 201.

⁹ *Ādāb al-Shāfi‘ī*, 201–2; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta’rīkh*, 2:177–78.

In the final report, Shāfi'ī recounts Shaybānī's description of his studies with Mālik and the eagerness of his students to study the ḥadīth he had collected from Mālik:

Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan [al-Shaybānī] used to say, "I personally heard between seven and eight hundred ḥadīth from Mālik." He stayed with Mālik for three years—or about three years. When he promised the people that he would transmit ḥadīth from Mālik to them, the place where he was filled up and the people flocked to him. When he transmitted from someone else, only a small group came. [Shaybānī] said to them, "If someone were to desire to censure you for anything more than what you are doing, he would be unable to do so. When I transmit to you from your teachers, only a small group comes. I know that there is an aversion in you [toward them]. If I transmit from Mālik, the place fills up for me."¹⁰

Ibn Abī Ḥātim closes with his interpretation of the report: "By the adherence of Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan [al-Shaybānī] to Mālik in order to transmit ḥadīth from him and disperse them among the people, [Shaybānī's] acceptance of [Mālik] and agreement with those who made him an authority and preferred him became clear."¹¹

The most noteworthy aspect of these passages is the comparatively mild treatment Ibn Abī Ḥātim accords Abū Ḥanīfa, Abū Yūsuf and Shaybānī. Although hardly laudatory and always making clear the inferiority of the Kūfan scholars, the reports come nowhere near the level of vituperation the critics customarily directed against their opponents. We may take as typical Fasawī's attack against them in his *Kitāb al-Ma'rifa wa-'l-ta'rīkh* (2:746–94), where the Kūfans are scourged at length for faulty reasoning, disputatiousness and lying. It would be wrong to view Ibn Abī Ḥātim as a moderate in this matter, for he was himself no stranger to the harsher reports and in fact includes a number of choice specimens in *Ādāb al-Shāfi'ī* (pp. 208–14). His comparative cordiality in the *Taqdima* is accounted for by his aim. To discredit the Kūfans here would clearly not serve his purpose, since he is enlisting them to testify in favor of the existence of the critics.

¹⁰ *Taqdima*, 4–5; *Ādāb al-Shāfi'ī*, 173–74; Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥiṣṣa*, 6:330; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdaḍī, *Ta'rīkh*, 2:173; Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Intiqā'*, 25.

¹¹ *Taqdima*, 5.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE BIOGRAPHICAL EVIDENCE

I. *General Remarks*

The bulk of the *Taqdima* consists of material which can be described as “biographical” in character, although it must be understood that the term is being used with caution here. While these reports refer to incidents in the critics’ life, Ibn Abī Ḥātim does not attempt to write their “life story.” He makes no mention of such matters as birthdates, deathdates and parentage and he does not arrange in chronological order the information he does include. The biographical material in the *Taqdima* is drawn from a number of genres and includes such varied items as elegiac poems and epistles, but conventional historical reports predominate. Taken individually, the reports give an impression of historicity, for there is very little of a fantastic character in the *Taqdima*. Taken together, they betray a pronounced repetitiveness that makes it clear that conventional themes are often being invoked. In his selection of material, Ibn Abī Ḥātim focuses on the biographical incidents that reveal his critics as critics and in this respect the biographical evidence differs from the testimonial only in directness of expression.¹ As a consequence, our proper understanding of the text depends on our ability to recapture the associations these reports had for Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s audience.

To illustrate this point, we may cite two reports in the *Taqdima* which indicate that Mālik and Awzā’ī were both quick to alter their opinions when confronted by convincing evidence. Naturally, this is an extremely laudable trait in a scholar and we might be tempted

¹ Ibn Abī Ḥātim differentiates between two kinds of material in the *Taqdima*, namely *awṣāf*, or “descriptions,” and examples of technical ḥadīth criticism (p. 219). This distinction seems to be based on usage rather than on intrinsic considerations, for we find that at least one report does double duty. Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna declared, “How severe was Mālik’s criticism of transmitters and how knowledgeable he was in them!” Ibn Abī Ḥātim quotes this report in the chapter on Ibn ‘Uyayna as an example of his criticism (p. 47) and in the chapter on Mālik by way of showing the respect Ibn ‘Uyayna had for his famous contemporary (p. 23).

to see these reports as nothing more than praise for the open-mindedness of Mālik and Awzā'ī. However, in other works we find that the adherents of ḥadīth make much of the stubbornness shown by their Kūfan rivals in clinging to their opinions when confronted with a refutatory ḥadīth. The report about Mālik does concern his being confronted with a ḥadīth² and while in the case of Awzā'ī no mention is made of the circumstances under which the great scholar disclosed this virtue,³ we may rest assured that Ibn Abī Ḥātim interpreted the report as a reference to ḥadīth. Thus, we find that the two reports unequivocally brand Mālik and Awzā'ī as devoted adherents to the doctrines of the critics.

Similar to these two reports is one in which a man travelled six months to bring Mālik a question from the people of his land. The man asked Mālik the question and Mālik said that he did not know the answer. The astonished and crestfallen man then asked him what he should tell his people. Mālik replied, "You will say to them, 'Mālik said, "I do not know (*lā uḥsin*).'"⁴ Here again, nothing could be more praiseworthy in a scholar than the honesty to confess his ignorance. However, the significance of this tale lies in the fact that, when Mālik said that he did not know, he meant that he did not know a passage from the Qur'ān or a ḥadīth addressing the question, and he did not venture a guess using his own faculty of reason. In other words, he did not stoop to practice *ra'y*, although there was pressure on him to provide an answer. Again, we find Mālik adhering to the tenets of the critics.

The biographical material in the *Taqdima* is topically arranged and most of it revolves around a small number of motifs, four of which will be examined in this chapter. Unfortunately, our ultimate comprehension is limited by the habit of Ibn Abī Ḥātim and the other adherents of ḥadīth of restricting themselves to the citation of transmitted material. The motifs appear again and again in their works but are never developed. In practical terms, this means that we can

² *Taqdima*, 31–32.

³ *Taqdima*, 203–4; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 6:241.

⁴ *Taqdima*, 18. Cf. Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Intiqā'*, 38; Abū Nu'aym, *Hilya*, 6:323–24; Ibn al-Jawzī, *Ṣifa*, 2:101. One student claimed that he could not count the number of times he had heard Mālik say "*lā adri*;" Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Kitāb Masā'il al-imām Ahmad*, ed. Muḥammad Bahja b. Muḥammad Bahā' al-Dīn al-Bayṭār (Cairo, 1353/1934), 296. See above, p. 8.

identify a motif and to a certain degree delineate its salient features, but the reason for its importance is often unclear. It can, for instance, be said that an interest in *zuhd* and *wara'* is characteristic of the critics, and by examining the occurrences of these motifs, we can gain some idea of the critics' understanding of them. However, the reason why Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his colleagues were preoccupied with *zuhd* and *wara'* remains uncertain.

II. *Dreams*

The dreams cited in the *Taqdima* demonstrate divine approbation for the critics. Nearly all of them fall into the category which Leah Kinberg has called "legitimizing dreams." Her evidence suggests that the reliance on dreams to legitimate religious figures and their doctrines was largely confined—at least in the earlier periods—to the members of the Ḥijāzian school and that dreams concerning Abū Ḥanīfa were normally censorious.⁵ It is characteristic of these dreams, as she points out, that they lend themselves to straightforward interpretations. Although they often possess a certain "dreamlike" atmosphere, they differ from those dreams typically dealt with in Arabic works of oneiromancy in that their point is usually quite clear, due either to their literalness or their transparent symbolism. It is interesting to note that one Ḥanafite seized upon the literalness of a dream attacking Abū Ḥanīfa as a reason for doubting its authenticity:

People have agreed unanimously that dreams are not to be interpreted according to their outward meaning. If they were, why would dream interpreters be needed?⁶

The basic message of the dreams in the *Taqdima* is rarely ambiguous, even in the instances where it is mentioned that an oneirocritic was consulted.

⁵ L. Kinberg, "The Legitimization of the *Madhāhib* through Dreams," *Arabica* 32 (1985):50–52. Good dreams about Abū Ḥanīfa did eventually appear, e.g. al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh*, 13:324–25. On this topic in general, see also L. Kinberg, "Dreams as a Means to evaluate Ḥadīth," *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 23 (1999):79–99.

⁶ Al-Malik al-Mu'azzam, *al-Sahm al-muṣīb fī kabid al-Khaṭīb*, published as *Kutāb al-Radd 'alā Abī Bakr al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī* (Cairo, 1351/1932), 111.

In the dreams in the *Taqdima*, we find the critic in one of two positions: he is either praised in the dream or he is the recipient of the dream. In the first case, sometimes the praise comes from an unidentified mysterious agency, as in the dream of Makhlad b. Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 191/806) concerning Abū Ishāq al-Fazārī.

I saw the people assemble in a desolate area or desert. A dust cloud appeared and descended upon the heads of the people. They began going right and left and here and there. I began saying, "With whom will I go?" or "Where will I go?" Suddenly someone called from the sky, "Follow Ibrāhīm b. Muḥammad al-Fazārī." (*Taqdima*, 285–86)

More often the speaker in the dream is not a disembodied voice, but rather an important religious authority. Dreams in which the Prophet appears are common. Muḥammad b. Rumḥ al-Miṣrī (d. 243/857) described a dream in which the Prophet expressed his approbation for Mālīk b. Anas.

Forty years ago I saw the Prophet in a dream. I said, "Messenger of God, [who is to be preferred when] Mālīk and al-Layth [b. Sa'd] differ over a legal question?" The Prophet said, "Mālīk, Mālīk, Mālīk. He was the heir of my ancestor." (*Taqdima*, 28)

We are told that the ancestor in question here is the prophet Abraham. Al-Walīd b. Muslim al-Dimashqī (d. 195/810) claimed to have seen the Prophet in a dream and to have been advised by him to embrace the teachings of Sufyān al-Thawrī.⁷

In the dreams in which the dreamer sees the critic, the venue is often Paradise. In one report,⁸ Bishr b. Bakr al-Tinnīsī (d. 205/820) recounted his dream-journey to Paradise. There he saw Mālīk wearing a *qalansuwa*, a tall, cone-shaped hat of Persian origin. Mālīk's wearing of this headgear commonly affected by men of learning confirmed his status as one of their number. The sighting of Mālīk in Paradise was an indication of God's satisfaction with him and by extension a vindication of his teachings.

An individual identified as "the brother of Abū 'Aqīl al-Qazwīnī" was made privy by means of a dream to the preparations being undertaken in Paradise to celebrate the arrival of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal.

⁷ *Taqdima*, 120. For some other examples of this motif, see Fritz Krenkow, "The Tarikh-Baghdad (Vol. XXVII) of the Khatib Abu Bakr Ahmad b. 'Ali b. Thabit al-Baghdadi," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 1912, 77–79; I. Goldziher, "The Appearance of the Prophet in Dreams," *JRAS* 1912, 503–6.

⁸ *Taqdima*, 28.

In a dream I saw a young man who had died in Qazwīn. I said, "What has your Lord done with you?" He said, "He forgave me." I said, "He forgave *you*?" He said, "Yes, and, oddly enough, so and so and so and so." I said, "Why do I see you in a hurry?"—for I saw that he was in a hurry. He said, "Because the people of the heavens, from the seventh to the lowest, have been occupied in putting up banners to welcome Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, and I would like to welcome him." (*Taqdima*, 311)

The report concludes with the note that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal had died about that time.

The dream interpreter Abū Karīma al-Kūfī related a dream submitted to him which revealed the divine approval for Sufyān al-Thawrī.

A man said that he dreamt that he was brought into Paradise. Yūnus b. 'Ubayd, Ibn 'Awn, Ayyūb and Sulaymān al-Taymī—and he mentioned a number of the scholars of ḥadīth of al-Baṣra, I remember only those four—were there, conversing in one of the gardens of Paradise. He said, "I thought of Sufyān al-Thawrī and said to them, 'Sufyān was one of our good men. Why do I not see him among you?' With their eyes lifted toward the firmament, they said, 'We see Sufyān only as you see a star.'" (*Taqdima*, 122)

Sufyān al-Thawrī's exalted rank in Paradise reflected God's approbation for his teachings.

Dreams do not only convey the message of divine approval of the critic, sometimes they themselves are that message. According to the ḥadīth, the true dream constitutes one of the 46 (or 70) parts of prophecy.⁹ Although prophecy has ceased, to mitigate this loss, dreams persist as a means of communicating glad tidings to mankind.¹⁰ Ibn Qutayba calls dreams "a kind of revelation and a sort of prophecy."¹¹ With its close association with prophecy, it is not surprising that the reception of dreams was seen to be a sign of divine favor. Legend has it that Mālik saw the Prophet in his sleep every night.¹² Of the critics in the *Taqdima*, only Awzā'ī and Abū Zur'a are depicted as recipients of dreams. Awzā'ī's son recorded that his father had a dream in which he saw himself in Paradise:

⁹ Dārimī, *Sunan al-Dārimī*, ed. Muḥammad Aḥmad Duhmān, 2 vols. (n.p., n.d.), 2:123; Ibn Māja, *Sunan Ibn Māja*, ed. Fu'ād 'Abd al-Bāqī, 2 vols. (Cairo, 1972), 2:1282–83, 1285–86, 1289; Tirmidhī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 9:123–25, 132–33, 152.

¹⁰ Dārimī, *Sunan*, 2:123; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 2:1283; Tirmidhī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 9:126–28, 130.

¹¹ M.J. Kister, "The Interpretation of Dreams: An Unknown Manuscript of Ibn Qutayba's *'Ibārat al-Ru'yā*," *Israel Oriental Studies* 4 (1974):74.

¹² Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilya*, 6:317.

My father said to me, "I want to tell you some news that will please you. I will not do so until you swear to me that you will not repeat it so long as I am alive." I said, "I do, father." He said, "[In a dream] I saw that I was placed at one of the gates of Paradise. Suddenly, one of the leaves of the door disappeared from its place. There was the Messenger of God, and with him were Abū Bakr and 'Umar, hastening to put [the leaf] back. They closed it and left. Then it disappeared again, they returned and it was secured in its place. It disappeared another time and the Messenger of God said to me, "'Abd al-Raḥmān, will you not grasp the door with us?" I did and it was secured. (*Taqdima*, 208-9)

Awzā'ī's anxiety that his son not repeat the dream is accounted for by the belief that the interpretation of the dream affected its outcome. By communicating it to an unsympathetic party, the son could have prejudiced its fulfillment. In the ḥadīth, the Prophet recommends that one reveal dreams only to scholars and friends.¹³ In one of Abū Zur'a's dreams he saw himself wearing a robe with fine stripes on it. According to Ibn Abī Ḥātim, the interpretation—based on the symbolism of the striped cloak, it being the garb of a scholar—was that Abū Zur'a would become famous, which, needless to say, he had the happiness to see come true.¹⁴ Abū Zur'a's other dream resulted from twenty years of fretting about his own and other people's neglect of supererogation, the pilgrimage, fasting and holy war. In the dream a figure came to him, struck him on the back and reassured him, saying, "You have performed many of acts of worship. What act of worship is better than the five daily prayers in an assembly?"¹⁵

That the scholars of ḥadīth accepted dreams as legitimate sources of information is clear from the sizable number of them included in their works. As mentioned above, Ibn Abī Ḥātim himself composed a monograph on this subject. Gustave E. von Grunebaum writes, "It cannot be emphasized enough that to the medieval Muslim, lay or scholar, the cognitive power of the dream does not present an epistemological problem."¹⁶ Not all dreams were true, however. The

¹³ Dārimī, *Sunan*, 2:124, 126; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 2:1285, 1287-88; Tirmidhī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 9:132-33.

¹⁴ *Taqdima*, 346. In another report (p. 306) we are told that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal wore a striped robe.

¹⁵ *Taqdima*, 347.

¹⁶ Gustave E. von Grunebaum, "The Cultural Function of the Dream as Illustrated

ḥadīth mention three kinds of dreams: the true dream (i.e. good news from God), the distressing dream from Satan and the auto-inspired dream.¹⁷ A number of factors were held to have a bearing on the veracity of a dream, including the truthfulness of the dreamer and the time of night when it came, but there is no indication that the scholars of ḥadīth, including Ibn Abī Ḥātim, took into account any of these considerations when they cited dreams in their works. In general, it would seem that they did not examine too closely those dreams that accorded with their prejudices and ignored those that did not. Ironically, we find this attitude satirized in an anecdote about Wakī' b. al-Jarrāḥ (d. 197/812). It is related that one day an anxious man told him that he had drunk wine (*nabīdh*) the previous day and that night someone had come to him in a dream and said, "You drank [the forbidden] *khamr*!" Wakī', who was fond of wine, retorted, "That was Satan."¹⁸

III. *The Study of Ḥadīth*

The accounts of the exceptional scholarly merit of the critics form the largest category of reports in the *Taqdima*. Although, some of these attributes were relevant to other branches of scholarship, in the main they were peculiar to the study of ḥadīth. Thus, by invoking them Ibn Abī Ḥātim signalled to his audience that the eighteen scholars in his *Taqdima* were critics of ḥadīth. Reports such as these continued to occupy a place of prominence in the biographical tradition long after the time of Ibn Abī Ḥātim, serving both to glorify the past and to inculcate laudable academic habits in students.

Much is made of the precocity of the critics. Shu'ba b. al-Ḥajjāj (d. 160/776) said that he went to Medina and found Mālik teaching a circle of students there while Nāfi', the client of 'Abd Allāh b. 'Umar, was still alive.¹⁹ The sources record that Nāfi' died in

by Classical Islam," *The Dream and Human Societies*, ed. G.E. von Grunebaum and Roger Caillois (Berkeley, 1966), 6.

¹⁷ Dārimī, *Sunan*, 2:125; Ibn Māja, *Sunan*, 2:1285; Tirmidhī, *Saḥīḥ*, 9:124, 133, 150. See also Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Ṭal*, 131; Rāmahurmuzī, *al-Muḥaddith al-fāṣil*, 391.

¹⁸ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh*, 13:472; al-Malik al-Mu'azzam, *Sahm*, 128; Dhahabī, *Tadhkira*, 1:308.

¹⁹ *Taqdima*, 26; *Jarḥ*, 4(1):205. Another version of this story in Bukhārī's *al-Ta'rikh al-kabīr* (4[1]:310; see also Abū Zur'a al-Dimashqī, *Ta'rikh Abī Zur'a al-Dimashqī*, ed. Shuhr Allāh b. Ni'amt Allāh al-Qawjānī, 2 vols. [Damascus, n.d.], 1:438; Ibn

117/735 and Mālik was born, according to various datings, between 90/708 and 97/715. In addition to emphasizing Mālik's youth, the passage suggests that his prestige was already so high that he could compete with the great transmitter Nāfi' for students. Sufyān al-Thawrī's views on questions of law were solicited even before there was a wrinkle to be seen on his face.²⁰ Attainment of scholastic competence at an early age was esteemed not only because it held the promise of future greatness, but also because it meant that the young scholar had a chance to study with the oldest surviving teachers of the previous generation. We are told that Abū Ḥātim began frequenting the scholars of ḥadīth when he was only fourteen years old and that he attained the status of teaching assistant (*mustamlī*) at an early age.²¹ Sufyān b. 'Uyayna claimed to have studied with Zuhri when he was only sixteen years and three months old.²² Both Shu'ba and Ḥammād b. Zayd recounted that they saw the youthful Sufyān b. 'Uyayna studying with 'Amr b. Dīnār al-Makkī (d. 126/743). Shu'ba remarked that Sufyān was still wearing a earring at the time and Ḥammād b. Zayd mentioned his *dhu'āba*, or "forelock."²³ Both the earring and the forelock were signs of Sufyān's youthfulness.

The hardships that a critic suffered in prosecuting his studies lent a certain glamor to his name. We have already discussed the risks Abū Zur'a ran to teach ḥadīth in defiance of the Kūfans of al-Rayy. More commonly, the reports relate the hardships the scholars braved to collect ḥadīth. We are told, for instance, that Mālik sat listening to 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Hurmuz al-A'raj al-Madīnī (d. 117/735) in the courtyard of the mosque of Medina for so long that he needed padded pants.²⁴ Mālik's discomfort appears a trifle when compared with the sufferings that the impoverished Abū Ḥātim bore on his ambitious journeys to collect ḥadīth. In the year 214/829 he was stranded in al-Baṣra after his money ran out. To purchase necessi-

Hibbān, *Majrūḥīn*, 1:44; Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Intiqā'*, 22–23) places Shu'ba in Medina one year after the death of Nāfi'. 'Alī b. al-Madīnī, who relates this version of the report, asserts that Mālik was not actually teaching the circle, but merely attending it as a student.

²⁰ *Taqdima*, 56; *Jarḥ*, 2(1):224; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 4:115.

²¹ *Taqdima*, 366–67.

²² *Taqdima*, 34. Rāmāhurmuzī refers to this report several times in his discussion of the age at which boy may begin the study of ḥadīth; *al-Muḥaddith al-fāṣil*, 185–200.

²³ *Taqdima*, 34; *Jarḥ*, 2(1):226.

²⁴ *Taqdima*, 27–28.

ties, he was forced to sell the clothes off his back piece by piece and two foodless days left him without the strength to continue his studies any further. He was rescued by one of his classmates who kindly shared his money with him.²⁵ In another report we hear that while aboard a ship, circumstances obliged Abū Ḥātim to perform the major ablution. His comrades recommended that he dunk himself in the sea. Unable to swim, he was suspended over the side of the ship with a rope to keep from drowning.²⁶ The jewel of this genre is the tale of Abū Ḥātim's harrowing passage from Medina to Egypt which G.H.A. Juynboll has aptly likened the story to a tale out of the Arabian Nights.

When we left Dāwūd al-Jaʿfarī²⁷ in Medina, we went to al-Jār²⁸ and took a ship. There were three of us, namely an old man called Abū Zuhayr al-Marwarūdhī,²⁹ another man from Nishapur [and me]. We sailed for three months with the wind blowing in our face. We became frustrated and our provisions began to run out. While a little still remained, we landed and began to walk for several days, until our food and water were exhausted. Then we walked a day and a night without eating or drinking a thing. The second and the third day were the same. Each day we walked until nightfall. In the evening we did our prayers and threw ourselves down where we were. Our bodies had been weakened by hunger, thirst and fatigue. When we woke on the third day, we began to march as best we could. The old man collapsed unconscious. We shook him, but he did not come to. We left him and my friend from Nishapur and I marched a *farsakh* or two further until I could not go on and passed out. My friend went on and left me. He continued to walk until he spotted some people from afar. They had brought their ship close to land and had come ashore near Bi'r Mūsā. When he spotted them, he signalled them with his clothes. They came to him with a skin of water. They let him drink and took him by the hand. He said to them, "Get my two friends who have collapsed unconscious!" The next thing I knew a man was pouring water on my face. I opened my eyes and said, "Give me some

²⁵ *Taqdima*, 363–64.

²⁶ *Taqdima*, 364.

²⁷ Dāwūd b. ʿAbd Allāh al-Jaʿfarī was a student of Mālik about whom very little seems to be known; *Ḥarḥ*, 1(2):417; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 3:190.

²⁸ Al-Jār was a city on the Red Sea coast of the Arabian Peninsula. Yāqūt locates it a day and a night's journey from Medina and describes it as a port for ships from Egypt, Ethiopia, Aden, India and China; *Buldān*, 2:5–7.

²⁹ Abū Zuhayr Muḥammad b. Ishāq al-Marwarūdhī (or al-Marwazī) is given little attention in the standard sources. Abū Ḥātim regarded him as a reliable transmitter; Bukhārī, *al-Taʾrīkh al-kabīr*, 1(1):41; *Ḥarḥ*, 3(2):195; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 6:68.

water.” He poured a small amount of water into a container and I drank it and felt better. That amount failed to quench my thirst and I said, “Give me water,” and he gave me a little more. He took me by the hand and I said, “Behind me is an old man who has collapsed!” He said that a group of them had already gone to him. He took me by the hand while I walked, dragging my legs, and he continued to allow me to drink a little at a time until I got to the ship and they brought my third friend, the old man. The crew of the ship were kind to us and we stayed [with them] a few days until we had recovered. Then they wrote a letter [of introduction] for us to the governor of a town called al-Rāya,³⁰ provisioned us with biscuit, gruel and water [and put us ashore]. We continued to walk until our biscuit, gruel and water were exhausted. We began marching, hungry and thirsty, along the shore until we came upon a turtle as big as a shield which the sea had cast up. We took a large rock and beat its shell and the shell broke apart. It contained something like egg yolk, so we took some of the seashells cast up on the beach and began to scoop out the yellow stuff and drink it until our hunger and thirst were assuaged. Then we passed on and we were able to continue until we entered the city of al-Rāya. We delivered our letter to the governor. He settled us in the palace and treated us well. Every day he had a squash brought to us, saying to his servant, “Bring the propitious squash to them.” For days he had that squash sent to us with bread. Then one of us said in Persian, “Why do you not call for ill-omened meat?” The man—the steward—had been listening and said, “I know Persian. My grandmother was from Herat.” He brought us meat after that. Then we left there and he gave us enough provisions to last us until we reached Egypt. (*Taqdima*, 364–66)

The eventual result of the scholar’s exertions would be a profound knowledge of ḥadīth. The biographies of ḥadīth scholars often contain remarks that in some way attempt to quantify the subject’s knowledge, and a number of such reports are to be found in the *Taqdima*. Sufyān al-Thawrī’s books, we are told, formed nine piles, each chest high.³¹ Abū Ḥātim is said to have collected between thirteen thousand and fifteen thousand ḥadīth from Ibn Nufayl al-Ḥarrānī (d. 234/849) alone³² and Abū Zur‘a guessed that he had received more than fifty thousand ḥadīth from Ibrāhīm b. Mūsā al-Ṣaghīr (d. ca. 225/839) in his eight years of studying with him.³³ It is not clear

³⁰ This city is apparently Rāyat al-Qulzum, or “al-Rāya on the Red Sea,” which Yāqūt identifies as a village in southeastern Egypt; *Buldān*, 2:746.

³¹ *Taqdima*, 115; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta’rīkh*, 9:161.

³² *Taqdima*, 363.

³³ *Taqdima*, 334–35.

how these figures were arrived at or how reliable they are, nevertheless there can be no doubt that the average critic was familiar with an immense number of ḥadīth.

However great the scholar's thirst for ḥadīth was, he was never to allow himself to become careless. Ḥammād b. Zayd declared that he did not care who disagreed with him as long as he was in accord with Shu'ba "because Shu'ba was not satisfied to hear a ḥadīth a single time, he used to go back to its transmitter several times, while it was enough for the rest of us to hear it just once."³⁴ Shu'ba said that he used to watch to the mouth of Qatāda b. Di'āma al-Sadūsī (d. 118/736) and when he said "I heard" (*sami'tu*) or "He transmitted to us" (*haddathanā*), he preserved the ḥadīth and when he did not, he did not bother with it.³⁵ These expressions ensured that Qatāda took the ḥadīth directly from the informants he named. Similarly, Sufyān al-Thawrī stopped 'Ikrima b. 'Ammār al-Yamāmī (d. 159/775) after each ḥadīth he recited in order to enquire whether he had heard it directly from the authority to whom he attributed it.³⁶ We are told that whenever Mālik had any doubts about a ḥadīth, he rejected it.³⁷

The care shown in collecting ḥadīth was also to be observed in teaching them. 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī demanded an atmosphere free from distractions for his classes:

No one talked, nibbed his pen, smiled or stood up in his class. It was as if there were birds on their heads or they were engaged in prayer. If he saw one of them smile, talk, laugh or nib his pen, he put on his sandals and left. (*Taqdima*, 257)

When Sufyān al-Thawrī mentioned a ḥadīth which he knew only imperfectly, he advised his students not to write it down.³⁸ Shu'ba averred that he would commit adultery before doctoring the isnād of a ḥadīth.³⁹

³⁴ *Taqdima*, 168.

³⁵ *Taqdima*, 161, 169–70.

³⁶ *Taqdima*, 68, 117.

³⁷ *Taqdima*, 14; Abū Nu'aym, *Hilya*, 6:318.

³⁸ *Taqdima*, 67.

³⁹ *Taqdima*, 173.

IV. *Zuhd and Wara'*

Throughout the *Taqdima* there are references to certain aspects of the moral temperament of the critics. As with the other themes in the *Taqdima*, Ibn Abī Ḥātim's treatment is unsystematic. Nevertheless, it is possible to distil a general impression of his moral ideals from these reports. He devotes a certain amount of attention to what may be called universal moral norms. In reference to the good manners (*ṭahārat al-khalq*) and generosity (*sakhā'*) of Shu'ba, we are told that whenever he took a boat ride, he used to pay the fare of all of his fellow passengers.⁴⁰ Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's generosity is exemplified by his offering a guest a cup of barley gruel.⁴¹ An instance of Sufyān al-Thawrī's filial devotion (*birr*) is also noted.⁴² Humility (*tawāḍu'*) was also highly esteemed. Shu'ba used to go barefoot to the market and was once seen carrying a large load of firewood on his shoulder.⁴³

An interest in *zuhd* and *wara'* is characteristic of the critics of ḥadīth.⁴⁴ As has been mentioned earlier, Ibn Abī Ḥātim wrote a monograph on the *zuhd* of eight of the Followers and works on *zuhd* are also ascribed to other prominent critics of ḥadīth.⁴⁵ Quoting Sufyān al-Thawrī, Ibn Abī Ḥātim writes: "*Zuhd* in this world is the best of deeds."⁴⁶ The term "*zuhd*" is most commonly translated as "asceticism" or "abstinence" and Ibn Abī Ḥātim does on one occasion link *zuhd* with abstinence from this world (i.e. *zalf nafsihī 'an al-dunyā*).⁴⁷ However, the examples given in the *Taqdima* show that his conception of *zuhd* was more passive than the general understanding of the terms "asceticism" and "abstinence" in English and had little in common with the strenuous self-mortification and world-

⁴⁰ *Taqdima*, 173.

⁴¹ *Taqdima*, 303.

⁴² *Taqdima*, 125.

⁴³ *Taqdima*, 278.

⁴⁴ For discussions of these two concepts, see *EL*, s.v. *Zuhd*, by Louis Massignon; Hellmut Ritter, "Studien zur Geschichte der islamischen Frömmigkeit: I. Ḥasan al-Baṣrī," *Der Islam* 21(1933):1-83; id. *Das Meer der Seele: Mensch, Welt und Gott in den Geschichten des Farīduddīn 'Aṭṭār* (Leiden, 1978), 191-208; Josef van Ess, *Die Gedankenwelt des Hārīt al-Muhāsibī* (Bonn, 1961), 95-107; Leah Kinberg, "What is Meant by *Zuhd*," *Studia Islamica* 61 (1985):27-44; Andras Hamori, "Ascetic Poetry (*Zuhdiyyāt*)," *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Abbasid Belles-Lettres*, 265-74.

⁴⁵ See above, p. 38.

⁴⁶ *Taqdima*, 86.

⁴⁷ *Taqdima*, 348.

rejection of the Sufis of later days. Rather it was a kind of bland insouciance in regard to worldly matters. Sufyān al-Thawrī gives the following definition of *zuhd*: "*Zuhd* in this world is the lessening of hope. It is not the eating of coarse foods nor the affectation of the woolen mantle [of the ascetics]."⁴⁸ Poverty, in fact, does not appear to have been an indispensable element of Ibn Abī Ḥātim's conception of *zuhd*.⁴⁹ What was required was not the active rejection of the world in the form of giving up one's possessions, but rather indifference to them and the surrounding world and equanimity in the face of life's trials. In some instances, *zuhd* appears to have amounted to little more than what is popularly called "stoicism." Abū Zur'a says,

In the past, when I was healthy, many times I was gripped by fever and became weak, and from that I felt pain. Today, I sometimes have fevers and sometimes I do not. Either way I do not feel any pain. I feel in my heart that that is the way it should be.⁵⁰

In Abū Zur'a, *zuhd* also manifested itself as a queer ignorance of mundane matters. In one case, he poured himself a glass of what appeared to be barley beer and was on the point of drinking it when he was told that it was really sesame oil that he was about to consume. Mention has already been made of the time when he was asked to add salt to a stew and he put in so much that it became inedible. When reproached for this, Abū Zur'a replied that he had not been told how much to add and he did not know.⁵¹

Zuhd was to be practiced without ostentation. Ibn Abī Ḥātim recounts the words of Abū Zur'a on this point:

If I had enjoyed bodily health to the extent I would have liked, I would have given all of my money to charity, gone to Ṭarsūs or one of the frontier cities [to fight the unbelievers], eaten only permitted foods and enjoined them. . . . I wear [nice] clothes so that when the people look at me, they do not say, "Abū Zur'a has renounced this world and has taken to wearing humble clothes." I eat the delicious dishes and sweetmeats offered to me in order that the people not say that Abū Zur'a shuns delicious dishes out of *zuhd*. Indeed, I eat good

⁴⁸ *Taqdima*, 101. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal (p. 305) also declares *zuhd* to be "*qīṣar al-amal*."

⁴⁹ Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal was asked whether a man with a hundred dinars could be a "*zāhid*" and answered, "Yes, on the condition that he does not rejoice when they increase or despair when they decrease;" 'Ulaymī, *Minhaj*, 2:6.

⁵⁰ *Taqdima*, 348.

⁵¹ *Taqdima*, 348-49.

things. Their effect on me and the effect of any other food are the same. Wearing nice clothes and wearing humble clothes are the same to me, because both kinds serve a single purpose. Whoever wants to be blameless in wearing clothes, should wear them only to cover his nakedness. If he intends this and nothing else, he is blameless.⁵²

We are told that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal deliberately dressed in such a way as to avoid giving the impression of asceticism (*nask*).⁵³ Wakī' b. al-Jarrāḥ feigned eating while he was actually fasting⁵⁴ and 'Abd Allāh b. al-Mubārak would pretend to fall asleep with his companions and then get up to pray secretly throughout the night.⁵⁵

Wara', like *zuhd*, was also a topic which attracted the attention of the ḥadīth scholars of this era. A book on this topic ascribed to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal has survived.⁵⁶ Ibn Abī Ḥātim devotes considerable space to the discussion of the *wara'* of the critics in the *Taqdima*. From the standpoint of practice, *wara'* was the antithesis of *zuhd*. Where *zuhd* represented a cultivated insouciance, *wara'* was an almost obsessive concern for moral scrupulousness. 'Abd Allāh b. al-Mubārak related an interesting tale which seems to illustrate his own *wara'*.

I was at a stopping point [on the pilgrims' road] between al-Kūfa and Mecca, when a man with a hemp rope came up and sat down in front of me. He said, "Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān, there is no other store in this village but mine and a traveller passes by me. If I refuse to sell this rope for less than one hundred dirhams, he will not find any way to avoid buying it from me. Should I sell it [at that price]?" I looked at my companions and said, "Pack your belongings." I left and did not reply. When we reached the next stopping point, I said to my companions, "Do you know why I did not say anything to the man with the rope?" They said no. I said, "I hated to tell him not to sell it, and thus forbid him something which God has made licit. I also hated to tell him to sell it, and thus do harm to the people with my words. So I left and did not say anything."⁵⁷

⁵² *Taqdima*, 348.

⁵³ *Taqdima*, 306.

⁵⁴ *Taqdima*, 223. Cf. al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta'rikh*, 13:472.

⁵⁵ *Taqdima*, 266–67.

⁵⁶ *Kitāb al-Wara'* (Cairo, 1340); partial trans. G.-H. Bousquet and Paul Charles-Dominique, "Le *Kitāb al-Wara'* ou Livre du Scrupule Religieux selon l'Imām Ibn Ḥanbal," *Hespéris* 39 (1952):97–119. A *Kitāb al-Wara'* is also ascribed to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's disciple Abū Bakr al-Marwazī (d. 292/905; Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:162). As the work ascribed to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal is, itself, described as a "*tasnīf*" of Abū Bakr al-Marwazī, it would be interesting to know whether these two works are identical.

⁵⁷ *Taqdima*, 279.

The merchant's cupidity placed Ibn al-Mubārak in an awkward position. Selling the rope for such an exorbitant sum was unfair to the travellers, but was nevertheless permitted by Islamic law. Ibn al-Mubārak's conscience would not allow him to forbid what the law permitted or to appear to condone the merchant's rapacity. He resolved *his* dilemma by not saying anything at all. This scrupulosity was not confined to matters of religion, not even in the very broad Islamic conception of the term. The example we are given of Yaḥyā b. Ma'īn's *wara'* concerns his refusal to answer the questions of Abū Ḥātim once he discovered that he had prepared them in writing in advance.⁵⁸

Although *zuhd* and *wara'* in some senses occupied opposite ends of the spectrum of moral behavior, the early scholars of ḥadīth in no way regarded them as incompatible. Indeed, they seem to have considered them a natural pair and Ibn Abī Ḥātim often discusses them together. As stated above, it is not clear why these concepts were so important to the scholars of ḥadīth. Yet they never entirely lost their importance in Islamic moral thought. They continue to figure prominently in later works, particularly those composed by students of ḥadīth, like Abū Nu'aym's *Ḥilyat al-awliyā' wa-ṭabaqāt al-asfīyā'* and Ibn al-Jawzī's *Ṣifat al-ṣafwa*. However, in later times *zuhd* and *wara'* tended to be overshadowed by mysticism and in Sufi circles they often came to be regarded as mere stages on the mystic's journey, rather than ends in themselves. Although mysticism had already attained a certain prominence by the time of Ibn Abī Ḥātim, it seems to have played no role in the thinking of the mainstream scholars of ḥadīth of his day.

V. *The Critics and Political Authorities*

The fourth motif to be dealt with here concerns the critics' relationship to the caliphs and their subordinates. The common characteristic of these reports is that they depict some form of friction between the individual religious scholars and the political authorities. Most often we find the critic either bringing unwelcome truths to the attention of the rulers or rejecting their entreaties. A typical example of this motif is the report of Awzā'ī's interrogatory before

⁵⁸ *Taqdima*, 317.

‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Alī, the uncle of the first two caliphs of the ‘Abbāsid dynasty, Abu ‘l-‘Abbās al-Šaffāḥ (r. 132/749–136/754) and al-Manšūr (r. 136/754–158/775). During the ‘Abbāsid revolution, ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Alī led the conquest of Syria and later served as its governor. He is best known to history for his implacable hatred towards the Umayyads and his ruthless attempts to hunt down and exterminate them. Awzā‘ī related his experience with him:

I was brought before ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Alī with the executioners standing in attendance. I was made to sit on a chair and he said to me, “What do you say about the blood of the Umayyads?” I began to talk about something else. He said, “Woe to you! Get back [to the point]! What do you say about the blood of the Umayyads?” I said, “It is not legal for you [to shed it].” He said, “Woe to you! Why [not]?” I said, “Because the Messenger of God sent out Muḥammad b. Maslama [as an envoy] and ordered him to fight the people until they said, ‘There is no God but God.’ When they said that, they rendered their blood and property inviolable, except by the right and account of God against them.” He said, “Woe to you! Is not the caliphate a legacy to us from the Messenger of God for the sake of which ‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib fought at Šifḥīn?” I said, “If the caliphate had been from the Messenger of God, then ‘Alī would not have agreed to [the appointment of] the two arbiters.” He said, “Woe to you! Get out!” I did not think that I would be brought out, except as a dead man.⁵⁹

Awzā‘ī has the distinction of being the only critic described in the *Taqdima* as holding a governmental position. Ibn Abī Ḥātim reports that the governor of Damascus Ibn Surāqa brought him from Beirut to Damascus to serve as a legal expert, apparently in the capacity of *faqīh al-jund*.⁶⁰ Despite the rather inauspicious start of relations between Awzā‘ī and the ‘Abbāsid conquerors, the critic seems to have enjoyed the sunshine of official favor, for we find him writing letters to the caliphs al-Manšūr and al-Mahdī (r. 158/775–169/785) and other officials asking for their help in improving the situation of people in unfortunate circumstances. Nine such letters are included in the *Taqdima* to demonstrate Awzā‘ī’s anxiety for the welfare of

⁵⁹ *Taqdima*, 212–13 (for other versions, see pp. 211–14); Abū Nu‘aym, *Ḥilya*, 6:141; Dhahabī, *Tadhkira*, 1:180–81.

⁶⁰ *Taqdima*, 187. It would seem that Awzā‘ī’s appointment occurred when Ibn Surāqa served as the governor of Damascus under the Umayyad caliph al-Walīd II (r. 125/743–126/744). Ibn Surāqa would later hold the same position under the ‘Abbāsid caliph al-Mahdī (r. 158/775–169/785), but by this time Awzā‘ī had died.

his fellow men and his lack of fear in bringing the true state of affairs to the attention of the authorities.⁶¹

The same solicitude for the welfare of his fellows and courage to give voice to his convictions are ascribed to Sufyān b. 'Uyayna in the report of his interview with Ma'n b. Zā'ida, the governor of the Yemen from 142/759–151/768.

Sufyān b. 'Uyayna went to Ma'n b. Zā'ida while he was in the Yemen. Hitherto Sufyān had not yet been sullied in any way by contact with the political authorities. He began to admonish Ma'n b. Zā'ida and tell him the condition of the Muslims. Ma'n started saying to him, "Are you their father? Are you their brother?" (*Taqdima*, 53)

The governor's indignant exclamations indicated that he was astonished that Sufyān b. 'Uyayna would run the risk of speaking to him in this fashion for the sake of people having no connection to him.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim attempts to make the case that Mālik also performed a similar role of fearless advocate within the Muslim community, but here he had to work with less satisfactory material. Under the title of "Mālik's speaking the truth to political power," Ibn Abī Ḥātim cites a report in which the caliph al-Manṣūr charged Mālik with the task of composing a book of laws to be imposed upon the entire Muslim empire.

Abū Ja'far—that is 'Abd Allāh b. Muḥammad b. 'Alī b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Abbās [i.e. the caliph al-Manṣūr]—one day said to me, "Is there anyone on the face of the earth more knowledgeable than you?" I said yes. He said, "Name them for me." I said, "I do not remember their names." He said, "I looked into this matter during the time of the Umayyads and became acquainted with it. The people of Iraq are people of lying, falsehood and forgery. The people of Syria are the people of holy war and there is not too much knowledge among them. The people of the Hejaz possess the rest of the knowledge and you are the scholar of the Hejaz, so do not gainsay the Prince of the Believers." Then he said to me, "I have conceived the desire to make this knowledge one knowledge and to send it then to the army commanders and judges so that they can learn it. I will cut off the head of anyone who disagrees." I said, "Prince of the Believers,"—or something like that—"the Prophet was in this community and he used to send out armies and collect taxes. He did not conquer many lands

⁶¹ *Taqdima*, 187–202. Schacht briefly discusses Awzā'ī's relations with rulers in *EI*², 1:773, s.v. al-Awzā'ī.

before he died. Then Abū Bakr came after him and he did not conquer many lands. Then 'Umar came after them and he conquered many lands and was forced to dispatch the Companions of Muḥammad as teachers. One great figure learned from one another until today. If you try to turn the people from what they know to what they do not know, they will regard that as unbelief. Rather, for the people of every land, establish the laws in accordance with their knowledge and take this knowledge for yourself." He said to me, "You have spoken well, write this knowledge down for Muḥammad [i.e. his son, the future caliph al-Mahdī]."⁶²

Al-Manṣūr desired to make the entire Islamic empire conform to Medinese law and Mālik pointed out that this would be imprudent, thus contradicting the caliph. The "knowledge" that Mālik was ordered to write down seems to have been his famous legal work, *al-Muwatta'*.⁶³

Another time, al-Manṣūr called Mālik before him to explain his great reliance on the legal opinions of the Companion Ibn 'Umar. Mālik argued that Ibn 'Umar was the last living Companion of the Prophet among the Medinese and the people naturally turned to him with their questions. Here again, al-Manṣūr displayed the same admirable streak of open-mindedness he had already manifested in the previous report, for he ordered Mālik to hold fast to his practice.⁶⁴ Another report records that when the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (r. 170/786–193/809) had completed the rites of the pilgrimage in Mecca, he sent Mālik a purse of money and requested his company for the trip to Medina. Mālik returned the purse unopened to the caliph's messenger, citing the ḥadīth, "Had they known, Medina would have been better for them."⁶⁵ Lest it nevertheless be feared that Mālik showed himself to be too friendly toward the caliphs, Ibn Abī Ḥātim includes a report in which Mālik declared himself to be the only one who refused to kiss the caliph's hand.⁶⁶

⁶² *Taqdima*, 28–29. Cf. Ibn Sa'd, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-kubrā: al-qism al-mutammim li-Ṭabī'ī ahl al-Madīna wa-man ba'dahum*, ed. Ziyād Muḥammad Ibrāhīm ([Beirut], 1403/1983), 440–41; Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Intiqā'*, 40–41. A version of this report is translated in I. Goldziher, *Die Zāhiriten*, 94; trans. *The Zāhiris*, 89 and G.H.A. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, 63.

⁶³ See *Taqdima*, 12. There is a similar story in *Ta'rikh Baghdād* (1:220–21) concerning the caliph al-Mahdī (*sic*) commissioning Muḥammad b. Ishāq to write his famous *Sīra*.

⁶⁴ *Taqdima*, 30. See G.H.A. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, 63–64.

⁶⁵ *Taqdima*, 30.

⁶⁶ *Taqdima*, 25; Ibn Hibbān, *Majrūhīn*, 1:43–44.

Of all the critics, Sufyān al-Thawrī appears as the one most chary of contact with the political authorities. His uncompromising stand is testified to in his letter to ‘Abbād b. ‘Abbād al-Ursūfī,⁶⁷ where he warns against their corrupting influence.⁶⁸ Sufyān al-Thawrī inspired the greatest number of stories in this vein and Ibn Abī Ḥātim quotes an generous selection of them in the *Taqdima*. One of these accounts depicts Sufyān’s interview with the caliph al-Mahdī and his vizier Ibn Yasār (d. 170/786).

Sufyān al-Thawrī was captured in al-Masjid al-Ḥarām and brought to Abū Hārūn [i.e. the caliph al-Mahdī] in a loincloth and cloak with two sandals in his hand. Sufyān said, “When I entered, I greeted him and sat down. Abū ‘Ubayd Allāh [i.e. Ibn Yasār] said, ‘I think that he has an evil doctrine’—meaning the doctrine of the Khārijites. I said to Abū Hārūn, ‘Who is this?’ He said, ‘This is Mu‘āwiya b. ‘Ubayd Allāh [b. Yasār].’ I said to him, ‘Beware of him and his colleagues.’ Then I said to him, ‘How much have you spent on this pilgrimage of yours?’ He said, ‘Abū ‘Abd Allāh, do we keep track of how much we spent? I said, ‘But ‘Umar b. al-Khaṭṭāb spent only seventeen dinars in his journey there and back.’ Then I stood up. He said to me, ‘Where are you going? We want to ask you about some things.’ I said, ‘I must use the privy.’ He said, ‘Where will we find you?’ I said, ‘The mosque.’” He hid from them and they looked for him. He left with the pilgrim caravan to al-Baṣra. It was proclaimed, “Whoever brings him in gets his bloodprice [as a reward] and whose-soever house he is found in is no longer under legal protection.” (*Taqdima*, 108)

That Sufyān al-Thawrī went into hiding at some point in his career is attested to in several of the reports in the *Taqdima*. A story told by ‘Iṣām b. Yazīd,⁶⁹ the servant of Sufyān, showed al-Mahdī trying to coax him into the open.

Sufyān said to me, “Carry this letter of mine to al-Mahdī.” I said, “Abū ‘Abd Allāh, if you could see clear to excuse me . . .” and I began to decline. He said to me, “Take this letter of mine and carry it to him. All around me is a group and if I had asked them, they would

⁶⁷ ‘Abbād b. ‘Abbād al-Ursūfī was a Syrian scholar famous for his piety; Bukhārī, *al-Ta’rīkh al-kabīr*, 3(2):41; *Jarḥ*, 3(1):83; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Majrūḥīn*, 2:170; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 5:97. The recipient of the famous letter is erroneously identified as ‘Abbād b. ‘Abbād al-‘Atakī in Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:519.

⁶⁸ *Taqdima*, 86–89.

⁶⁹ ‘Iṣām b. Yazīd al-Iṣbahānī transmitted from his master, Mālik and other scholars of the age; *Jarḥ*, 3(2):26; Abū Nu‘aym, *Akhbār Iṣbahān*, 2:138–39; Ibn Ḥajar, *Lisān*, 4:168.

have rush to carry it to Abū 'Ubayd Allāh [i.e. Ibn Yasār⁷⁰]." So I took the letter and went to Abū 'Ubayd Allāh. I said, "I am the messenger of Sufyān." He let me pass and I was made to dismount. He asked about me in secret and said, "Come see the Prince of the Believers early tomorrow morning." I tried to beg off, but he said, "There is no help for it." Then I awoke early the next day and went to the caliph. A council of the palace had convened. I handed the caliph the letter and he began to look in it. It said, "I declare that there be amnesty for me and those who were sought out because of me and that I be free to go wherever I wish in the lands of God. I hope that God will show His favor to me before that." The caliph gave me some money to take to him and I refused to accept it. He said, "There is amnesty for him and those who were sought because of him and he is free to go wherever he wants in the lands of God. But he must appear before me in the Pilgrimage season and he is obliged to place his hand in mine in order that he command the good and forbid the bad." I returned to Sufyān and said, "God has fulfilled your desire! The Prince of the Believers said such and such and such and such." He said, "Be quiet. Tell him to put into practice what he already knows. When he puts into practice what he already knows, I will come and teach him what he does not know." God showed favor to Sufyān and he died before that could happen.⁷¹

Clearly Ibn Abī Ḥātim regards the defiance or avoidance of the political authorities as a characteristic of the critics of ḥadīth, but why this is so is difficult to determine. The reports are vague about what it is the critics were supposed to dislike about the political authorities. In the writings of the scholars of ḥadīth we find little interest in contemporary political affairs and certainly nothing resembling a political manifesto. We are told that someone accused Mālik of attending the political authorities "while they oppress and tyrannize."⁷² However, we find in the report quoted above that when Sufyān al-Thawrī was finally brought before the caliph—a tableau that by all rights should have been a climactic showdown between good and evil—he denounced the caliph for nothing more than extravagance in the performance of the pilgrimage. Although such extravagance was no doubt in poor taste, particularly when people were starving as some versions of the story maintain;⁷³ even if wholly

⁷⁰ In another version of this story (*Taqdima*, 108–9), Ibn Yasār is replaced by Ya'qūb b. Dāwūd (d. 187/803), who succeeded him as vizier to al-Mahdī in 163/779.

⁷¹ *Taqdima*, 107–8; Abū Nu'aym, *Ḥilya*, 7:43–45. Cf. *Taqdima*, 108–10.

⁷² *Taqdima*, 30.

⁷³ *Taqdima*, 106.

true, it does not seem to be a terribly serious charge. In a couple of reports in *Ādāb al-Shāfiʿī*, the outspoken Ibn Abī Dhīʿb⁷⁴ accused the caliph of unlawful collection and dispersal of funds.⁷⁵ The reports do not specify what was meant here and in the *Taqdima* even this vague accusation is moderated. There Sufyān al-Thawrī, after laying a similar charge against al-Mahdī, asked, “Who is able to give everyone his due?”⁷⁶

What is odd is that the portrayals of the caliphs in these reports tend to be favorable rather than otherwise (although this is not equally true of the other political authorities). The caliphs usually end up acknowledging the justice of the critic’s words and when they put requests to the critics, they never seem aimed at compromising the critic’s moral integrity. They do not, for instance, demand that the critics forge ḥadīth in favor of their regime. Furthermore, it is clear that the approbation of the political authorities was valued. Ibn Abī Ḥātim advertises Awzāʿī’s connection with the political authorities and, as we have seen, he also cites material showing al-Manṣūr’s esteem for Mālīk. If Yāqūt’s report can be accepted, Ibn Abī Ḥātim himself did not scruple to attend the ruler of al-Rayy Aḥmad b. al-Ḥasan al-Mādhārāʾī.⁷⁷ The generally positive picture of the caliphs and the apparent necessity that the critic defy them sometimes result in rather odd situations. For instance, al-Manṣūr’s desire to impose Medinese law over the entire Islamic empire at worst can be construed as a case of overenthusiasm for doing good. In the face of the caliph’s noble intention, we may be excused for viewing the pragmatic advice of Mālīk, shrewd though it may be, as slightly machiavellian. The perversity of Sufyān al-Thawrī’s reluctance to help al-Mahdī rule justly seems inexplicable.

We can readily dismiss as absurd any notion that it was Ibn Abī Ḥātim’s intention to portray Mālīk as cynical and Sufyān al-Thawrī as churlish and surly. What this means is that the reports do not make terribly much sense in moral terms unless we accept that the non-cooperation with the political authorities itself was the primary

⁷⁴ The sources depict Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Dhīʿb (d. 159/775) as the most vociferous and fanatical opponent of the political authorities, e.g. *Ādāb al-Shāfiʿī*, 46–49; *Taqdima*, 216.

⁷⁵ *Ādāb al-Shāfiʿī*, 46–48.

⁷⁶ *Taqdima*, 111.

⁷⁷ See above, pp. 26, 34.

principle at stake. Then we can see that the attractive offers proffered by the authorities put this principle into relief, whereas the demand that the scholar do anything inherently repugnant, such as forging ḥadīth, would serve the opposite end. The question remains though, why would this be an primary principle? In his discussion of the stories concerning Abū Ḥanīfa's refusal to serve as a judge, Joseph Schacht has suggested that they account for "the fact, surprising to later generations, that the master should not have been a *qāḍī*."⁷⁸ What we can say is that Hījāzian scholars had conspicuously little success in gaining positions within the government. These reports place this failure in the best possible light by making it appear that these scholars rejected the rulers, rather than the other way around, and perhaps this accounts for their inclusion in the *Taqdima*.

VI. Conclusion

After the examination of these major motifs of the *Taqdima*, the question of the historical value of the individual reports remains. Their importance as testimony for the preoccupations of the scholars of ḥadīth is incontestable; less certain is their usefulness for writing the biographies of the critics. Of the types of reports dealt with here, modern scholars have hitherto given the most attention to those treating the meetings of the critics with political authorities. This is natural since these reports link the critics to well-known and important figures and can be dated within certain limits. It is, however, characteristic of these stories that while the main point is fairly immutable in the various versions, the circumstantial details are distressingly unstable. The reports speak with one voice that Sufyān al-Thawrī was brought before the caliph and defied him. This reassuring unanimity dissolves over the question of the identity of the caliph. This conundrum apparently exercised Ibn Abī Ḥātim, for he

⁷⁸ *EI*², 1:123, s.v. Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nu'mān. The stories of the critics and the political authorities find parallels in the stories in which scholars struggle to avoid appointment to the office of *qāḍī*. Noel J. Coulson examines some of the latter in "Doctrine and Practice in Islamic Law: One Aspect of the Problem," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* 18 (1956):211–26. It will be noticed there that the sources actually have very little to say about the reason for the scholars' dislike of this office, leaving modern researchers to offer various suggestions. For a different interpretation of these reports, see Muhammad Qasim Zaman, *Religion and Politics under the early 'Abbāsids: The Emergence of the proto-Sunni Elite*, (Leiden, 1997), 78–81.

digresses, citing several accounts of the incident in which the caliph is variously identified as al-Manṣūr or his son al-Mahdī. To account for this discrepancy, Ibn Abī Ḥātim quotes the explanation offered by Abū Nuʿaym al-Faḍl b. Dukayn (d. 219/834) that Sufyān al-Thawrī was brought before al-Mahdī *during* the reign of al-Manṣūr.⁷⁹ One can readily appreciate the ingenuity behind this solution which aims at reconciling the contradictory indications. It immediately brings to mind the report about Mālīk, quoted above, in which al-Manṣūr seeks to have Medinese law imposed as the law of the land and is dissuaded from this by the great scholar. The caliph settles in the end for commissioning a digest of the laws of Medina *for* his son al-Mahdī. In light of this, we should not be surprised to learn that in other works al-Mahdī himself is identified as the caliph who seeks to promulgate the *Muwattaʿ* as the law of the land.⁸⁰ In fact, this story is also told of the caliph Hārūn al-Rashīd (who, it is said, additionally sought to have the *Muwattaʿ* suspended from the walls of the Kaaba in the fashion of the Muʿallaqāt poems)⁸¹ and, surprisingly, even of al-Maʿmūn (r. 198/813–218/833), who did not ascend to the throne until nineteen years after Mālīk's death.⁸² All of this does not necessarily mean that Sufyān al-Thawrī and Mālīk did not meet one of the caliphs, however it points up that the usefulness of these stories for historical writing is severely limited.

⁷⁹ *Taqdima*, 113. Elsewhere, Abū Nuʿaym asserts that Muḥammad b. Yūsuf al-Firyābī (d. 212/827; Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:40), who transmits the reports and was a student of both Sufyān and Awzāʿī, confounded Sufyān, who was brought before al-Mahdī, with Awzāʿī, who went before al-Manṣūr; *Taqdima*, 213–14. It should be noted that the version of the story translated above has Awzāʿī meeting ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAlī and not al-Manṣūr, while another maintains that he deliberately avoided meeting al-Manṣūr and met with the crown prince al-Mahdī instead (*Taqdima*, 214–16).

⁸⁰ Ṭabarī, *al-Muntakhab min Kitāb al-Dhayl al-mudhayyal in Dhuyūl Taʾrīkh al-Ṭabarī*, ed. Muḥammad Abu ʿl-Faḍl Ibrāhīm (Cairo, 1977), 659. Ṭabarī notes that the same story is also told in connection with al-Manṣūr.

⁸¹ Abū Nuʿaym, *Hilya*, 6:332.

⁸² Abū Nuʿaym, *Hilya*, 6:331. For a brief discussion of this matter, see J. Schacht, *ET*², 6:263, s.v. Mālīk b. Anas. Similar confusion exists over al-Mahdī's alleged commissioning of Muḥammad b. Ishāq's *Sīra*, since Ibn Ishāq had been dead for eight years by the time al-Mahdī came to the throne. Recognizing that, al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī suggests that the caliph in question was probably al-Manṣūr (*Taʾrīkh*, 1:221).

CHAPTER SIX

THE DOCUMENTARY EVIDENCE

I. *Ibn Abī Ḥātim's Use of the Documentary Evidence*

Documentary evidence is the third kind of material that Ibn Abī Ḥātim marshals as proof that the scholars treated in the *Taqdima* were critics of ḥadīth. This evidence most commonly takes the form of technical statements ascribed to his critics about the reliability of transmitters and the authenticity of ḥadīth. The number of critical pronouncements varies, with more being cited for the earlier critics and fewer for the later. For the scholars of the first generation, Ibn Abī Ḥātim seems to be supplying all of the technical pronouncements he knows. He drops this approach in his treatment of the later generations, stating (p. 219) that he cites only enough to make his point.

In addition to the difference in the quantity of the technical pronouncements between the first generation and the later ones, there is also a palpable variation in quality. Many of those Ibn Abī Ḥātim quotes for the scholars of the first generation are rather scrappy, often deviating from the conventional forms of such pronouncements and occasionally having no obvious connection with ḥadīth criticism. As an example of the criticism of Mālik b. Anas, Ibn Abī Ḥātim quotes a discussion his father had with Mālik's nephew, Ismā'īl b. Abī Uways (d. 226/840):

I asked Ismā'īl b. Abī Uways, "Who is it Mālik [means when] he says, 'A reliable person (*thiqa*) transmitted to me'?" He said, "He is Makhrama b. Bukayr b. al-Ashajj." (*Taqdima*, 22; *Ḥarḥ*, 4[1]:363)

Ibn Abī Ḥātim interprets this as Mālik's declaration that Makhrama b. Bukayr was reliable and cites it as an instance of Mālik practicing ḥadīth criticism.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim displays little concern for the correctness of the critical judgements he cites, and we sometimes find him recording contradictory judgements and judgements he considers to be wrong.

The differing critical evaluations of the historian Muḥammad b. Ishāq (85/704–150/767) are the best examples of this. Mālik displays a most violent dislike for Ibn Ishāq. In one report he calls him an “antichrist,”¹ and in another he says that Ibn Ishāq was banished from his native city of Medina.² On the other hand, Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna is quoted as saying, “I studied with Ibn Ishāq for over seventy years and not a single one of the Medinese accused him [of anything] or criticized him;”³ and Shu‘ba later in the work calls Ibn Ishāq “the prince of ḥadīth transmitters.”⁴ Taken at face value, there seems to be no way to reconcile these judgements.⁵

On occasion Ibn Abī Ḥātim does feel compelled to comment on the judgements which seem incorrect to him. As proof of Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna’s status as a critic, he cites his assertion that al-Aḥwaṣ b. Ḥakīm was reliable and superior to Thawr.⁶ Ibn Abī Ḥātim then contradicts this judgement, writing that his father felt that it was certain that al-Aḥwaṣ was unreliable and that Thawr was “truthful.”⁷ He also is at pains to explain how Awzā‘ī could have declared Qurra b. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān (d. 147/764) to be the scholar most knowledgeable in the ḥadīth of Zuhri.⁸ Ibn Ḥajar would later note that Qurra had taken only about sixty ḥadīth from Zuhri, which was far fewer than several other students.⁹ From these examples, it becomes clear that Ibn Abī Ḥātim was not so much concerned whether the judgements were right or wrong but rather with their mere existence. The nature of the technical judgements is discussed in more detail below.

¹ *Taqdima*, 20; *Jarḥ*, 3(2):193; Bardha‘ī, *Du‘afā’*, 2:592.

² *Taqdima*, 19; *Jarḥ*, 3(2):192–93.

³ *Taqdima*, 38; *Jarḥ*, 3(2):192.

⁴ *Taqdima*, 152.

⁵ The source of Mālik’s profound antipathy toward Muḥammad b. Ishāq is one of the most vexed questions in transmitter criticism. The most complete discussions of the matter are found in Alfred Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishāq’s Sirat Rasūl Allāh* (Oxford, 1955), xxxiv–xl; H.R. Idris, “Réflexions sur Ibn Ishāq,” *Studia Islamica* 17 (1962):23–35 and M.J. Kister, “The Massacre of the Banū Qurayḥa: A Reexamination of a Tradition,” *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam* 8 (1986):74–80. For the explanation of the contradictory reports, see below, pp. 90–92.

⁶ This would appear to be a reference to the Syrian transmitter Thawr b. Yazīd al-Himṣī, who died around 150/767; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 2:33–35.

⁷ *Taqdima*, 41–42; *Jarḥ*, 1(1):328.

⁸ *Taqdima*, 204–5; *Jarḥ*, 3(2):132.

⁹ Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 8:372–74.

II. *The General Principles of Ḥadīth Criticism*

Ḥadīth criticism resembles textual criticism in its principal lineaments, although it is more ramified and presents many unique features. As a comprehensive study of third/ninth and fourth/tenth century ḥadīth criticism is still lacking, it has been found necessary to devote the balance of the present chapter to giving an overview of the subject based on the works of Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his contemporaries. Special attention will be devoted to Ibn Abī Ḥātim's two main technical contributions, namely the hierarchical arrangement of the terminology of personality criticism and the earliest articulation of the dogma decreeing the collective reliability of the first generations of Muslims. With these refinements, ḥadīth criticism came to assume its technically mature form and we see that Goldziher was wholly justified in his assessment in *Muhammedanische Studien* (2:144) that the evaluation of ḥadīth transmitters reached its full height with Ibn Abī Ḥātim.

The main tool the critic had for determining the authenticity of a given ḥadīth was the collation of all of the versions of the ḥadīth at his disposal. This gave him a birdseye view of the history of the transmission of the text and enabled him to trace the passage of the ḥadīth through time, from the teachers of one generation to the students of the next. By comparing the isnāds, the critic found one of three circumstances at each register of the transmission of the ḥadīth:

- 1) The ḥadīth was taught by more than one transmitter.
- 2) The ḥadīth was taught by a single transmitter.
- 3) There was no recorded transmitter of the ḥadīth.

It was on the basis of these three circumstances that Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his colleagues passed judgement on the authenticity of ḥadīth and the reliability of transmitters.¹⁰ If a ḥadīth had several transmitters at every register below the level of the Companions—that is if the lines of transmission did not converge below that register—it was generally considered authentic. If, however, at some level below

¹⁰ For a modern examination of these phenomena, see G.H.A. Juynboll, "Some isnād-analytical Methods illustrated on the basis of several woman-demeaning Sayings from ḥadīth Literature," *Qantara* 10 (1989):343–84.

the Companions, a ḥadīth had only a single transmitter—that is if its lines of transmission did converge—its authenticity was cast into doubt. The question that occupied the mind of the critic in such cases was: How could it be that this transmitter was the only one of his alleged teacher's students to transmit the ḥadīth from him? There was a strong suspicion that he had made it up himself and falsely ascribed it to his teacher. Thus, when a transmitter's ḥadīth closely matched those of his peers, he was considered reliable and when he transmitted ḥadīth unknown to his fellow students, it was feared that he was a forger. However, if a student transmitted a ḥadīth unparalleled in the transmissions of his peers, it might be accepted on the basis of his previously established good reputation. Such cases were evaluated individually. When there was a gap in the transmission of a ḥadīth—that is when its lines of transmission converged on a gap—it was treated as a special case of the convergence on a single transmitter, the difference being that the identity of the transmitter was unknown. Being unknown, there was no way of taking into consideration his reputation and, as a consequence, these ḥadīth were normally rejected out of hand.

III. *The Lines of Transmission Do Not Converge*

A. *The Collation of Ḥadīth*

Ḥadīth that were transmitted by more than one scholar in each generation were usually considered authentic. If there were two contradictory ḥadīth on the same legal question, the normal practice was to accept the one represented in the most lines of transmission. Muslim's *Kitāb al-Tamyīz* treats instances in which two differing versions of a ḥadīth are ascribed to a single transmitter. According to Muslim the problem

is that a group of scholars of ḥadīth narrate a ḥadīth from someone like Zuhri—or some other prominent scholar—with a single isnād and a single text (*matn*), agreeing on the narration of it in isnād and text and not differing over it at all; while someone else relates it from the very same person that the group which we described transmitted from and he contradicts them in regard to the isnād or alters the text (*yaqlibu 'l-matn*), and so makes it disagree with what the scholars of ḥadīth whom we described transmitted. According to this procedure by means of which we saw the scholars of ḥadīth like Shu'ba, Sufyān b. 'Uyayna,

Yahyā b. Saʿīd, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī and other prominent scholars judging ḥadīth, it is known then that the correct relation is the one the group of the scholars of ḥadīth transmitted and not [that of] the isolated individual, even if he was careful.¹¹

In accordance with his belief that the lines of transmission of a defective ḥadīth will converge at some register on a single transmitter (or on a small number of transmitters), Muslim does little more than show that the ḥadīth to be favored is represented in more lines of transmission.

Muslim's procedure is clearly shown in his analysis of the authenticity of a ḥadīth of Yazīd b. Abī Ziyād (d. 136/753) from Kurayb b. Abī Muslim (d. 98/716), a client of the Companion Ibn ʿAbbās, on the question of whether a lone individual is to stand to the right or to the left of the prayer leader. He first cites the defective version:

Ḥasan al-Ḥulwānī and ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Dārimī—ʿUbayd Allāh b. ʿAbd al-Majīd—Kathīr b. Zayd—Yazīd b. Abī Ziyād—Kurayb—Ibn ʿAbbās: He said, "I spent the night with my aunt Maymūna. The Messenger of God lay along the length of the mattress and I lay across it. He got up and performed an ablution while we were sleeping. Then he stood and prayed. I stood on his right and he took me and put me on his left. When he prayed, I said, 'O Messenger of God, etc.'"

Muslim comments,

This report is wrong and poorly documented, for the correct versions narrated by the reliable transmitters are in agreement on the opposite of that, [namely,] that Ibn ʿAbbās [originally] stood to the left of the Messenger of God and he shifted him around until he stood him to his right. Likewise, the *sunna* of the Messenger of God in the rest of the reports from Ibn ʿAbbās is that the lone prayer with the prayer leader stands to the right of the prayer leader, not to his left. We will mention—God willing—the relation of the [other] students of Kurayb from Kurayb from Ibn ʿAbbās . . . [gap in the text]. After that we will then mention the relation of all of the other students of Ibn ʿAbbās from Ibn ʿAbbās in agreement with [the more common form of the report from] Kurayb, [e.g.] Ibn Abī ʿUmar—Sufyān—ʿAmr b. Dīnār—Kurayb—Ibn ʿAbbās, that he spent a night with Maymūna. The Messenger of God got up at night and performed an ablution. Ibn ʿAbbās said, "I got up and did the same thing as the Messenger of God. Then I went and stood on his left and he moved me to his right."

¹¹ Muslim, *Kitāb al-Tamyīz*, ed. Muḥammad Muṣṭafā al-Aʿẓamī (Riyadh, n.d.), 126.

Muslim now lists the twelve other lines of transmission of the version given by 'Amr b. Dīnār (from Kurayb) in which the Prophet put the Companion Ibn 'Abbās on his right, four through Kurayb and eight others through other students of Ibn 'Abbās. He then says,

It is established by the authentic reports from Kurayb and the rest of the students of Ibn 'Abbās which we cited that it is an indubitable error and mistake that the Prophet stood [Ibn 'Abbās] on his left. The relation of Jābir b. 'Abd Allāh from the Prophet is similar to that which is established from Ibn 'Abbās, [namely,] that the Prophet stood him to his right. In the story of Ibn Jazara from 'Ubāda b. al-Ṣāmit b. 'Ubāda [are the words], "We went to Jābir and he said, 'The Messenger of God stood up and prayed. Then I went on his left. He took my hand and moved me around until he had stood me on his right. Then Jabbār b. Ṣakhr came and stood to the left of the Messenger of God. He then took both of us by the hand and pushed us back until he had stood us behind him.'" Muḥammad b. al-Munkadir related the same thing from Jābir.¹²

Thus, the spuriousness of the first version, that of Yazīd b. Abī Ziyād from Kurayb, was shown by its contradiction by the version transmitted by the other students of Kurayb and the version transmitted by the other students of Kurayb's teacher, Ibn 'Abbās. Muslim then cites as further reinforcement the report from the Companion Jābir b. 'Abd Allāh (d. 78/697) expressing the same doctrine.

B. *The Evaluation of the Transmitters*

1. *Intrinsic Considerations*

For the critics, the authenticity of a ḥadīth depended on the reliability of its transmitters. If a ḥadīth was authentic, it was because it had been carefully preserved and handed down by scholars from the time of the Prophet. Conversely, if a ḥadīth was unauthentic, it was because someone had either distorted or forged it. Therefore, if a ḥadīth was to be rejected, one of its transmitters had to be labelled as unreliable.

How, then, did the critics know whether a transmitter—who by their time may have already been dead a century or more—was reliable or not? The critics' appraisal of a transmitter was based almost entirely on their opinion of the material he taught. The occurrence of a transmitter's name in the isnāds of a ḥadīth deemed to

¹² Muslim, *Tamyīz*, 136–38.

be unauthentic was very detrimental to his reputation. Muslim in the introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ* says,

The sign of the unauthentic ḥadīth (*munkar*) of a transmitter is that, if his narration of a ḥadīth is compared (*ʿurīdat*) to that of other worthy scholars, his relation contradicts their relation or barely agrees with it. If the majority of his ḥadīth are like that, he is renounced, unacceptable, and unusable in ḥadīth.¹³

In his *Kitāb al-Tamyīz* (p. 162), Muslim writes:

Sound [transmissions] are distinguished from the unsound ones and transmitters of weak reports are distinguished from their opposites among scholars of ḥadīth by the collection of these relations and the comparison (*muqābala*) of one with another. For that reason, the scholars with expertise in ḥadīth regard as weak (reading: *daʿaʿafa*) ʿUmar b. ʿAbd Allāh b. Abī Khathʿam and transmitters like him (reading: *wa-ashbāhahū*) because of their transmission of some rejected ḥadīth which do not conform to the narrations of the well-known reliable scholars of ḥadīth.

It is because the scholar's transmissions differ from those of his colleagues that he is considered unreliable. When asked whose transmissions should be rejected, part of Shuʿba's answer was, "Whoever transmits from well-known transmitters what the [other] well-known transmitters are not familiar with."¹⁴

To assign the blame for an unauthentic ḥadīth, the critic would collect all of the versions of it at his disposal and then compare them to see who transmitted it first.¹⁵ This was determined by the convergence of the lines of transmission. Ibn Hibbān's interest in the transmitter Baqīya b. al-Walīd al-Ḥimṣī (110/728–197/812) was piqued after he came across Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's admission that he had erred in thinking that Baqīya related unauthentic ḥadīth only from unknown transmitters, and that he now believed that Baqīya also transmitted them from famous ones. Ibn Hibbān says,

¹³ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:5; cf. G.H.A. Juynboll, "Muslim's Introduction," 269.

¹⁴ Ibn ʿAdī, *Kāmil*, 1:163; Ibn Hibbān, *Majrūḥīn*, 1:74; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kifāya*, 142.

¹⁵ Aḥmad Muḥammad Nūr Sayf examines Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn's use of *muʿārada* to evaluate transmitters in *Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn wa-Taʾrīkhuhū*, 1:85–88. M.M. Azami discusses the same procedure in his *Studies in Hadith Methodology and Literature* (Indianapolis, 1977), 51–56 and in his introduction to Muslim's *Kitāb al-Tamyīz*, 23–39.

Abū ‘Abd Allāh [i.e. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal] did not [deliberately] slander him, but he only looked at some forged ḥadīth related from him from reliable people and rejected them. On my life, he is hasty in rejection! For something even worse than this there is no reason to impugn the reliability of a person in ḥadīth. I entered Homs and my greatest concern was Baqīya. I tracked down his ḥadīth and I copied the notes [of his students] in their entirety. I tracked down the relation of his early students which I did not find [at first] with short isnāds. I saw that he was reliable, but he was someone who doctored isnāds (*mudallis*). He heard ḥadīth in a correct manner from ‘Ubayd Allāh b. ‘Umar, Shu‘ba and Mālīk. Then he heard [some ḥadīth] ascribed to ‘Ubayd Allāh b. ‘Umar, Shu‘ba and Mālīk from rejected and weak liars, like al-Mujāshi‘ b. ‘Amr, al-Sarī b. ‘Abd al-Ḥamīd, ‘Umar b. Mūsā al-Mīthamī, others of their ilk and some people known only by their *kunyās*. [Baqīya] related [the material] he heard from these weak transmitters as coming directly from those reliable scholars he had seen. He used to say, “‘Ubayd Allāh b. ‘Umar from Nāfi’” and “Mālīk from Nāfi’,” etc. [His students] transmitted [the material] (*fa-ḥamalū*) from Baqīya [directly] from ‘Ubayd Allāh and from Baqīya [directly] from Mālīk and the feeble transmitter was omitted from between [Baqīya and the sound transmitter]. As a consequence, the forged ḥadīth were attributed to Baqīya and the [real] forger escaped from in between. In reality, Baqīya was taxed with some students who used to omit [the names of] the weak transmitters from [the isnāds of] his ḥadīth and transmitted them without the weak transmitters (*yusawwūnahū*).¹⁶ So all of that [forging] was attributed to him.¹⁷

By close scrutiny of the transmissions of Baqīya’s students, Ibn Ḥibbān discovered that he had only passed on the forgeries of his own teachers and did not forge the ḥadīth himself. However, because he and his students often omitted the names of the weak transmitters from their isnāds, it appeared at first glance that he was personally responsible for the forging.

Yaḥyā b. Ma‘īn used the same basic technique to determine whether Ḥammād b. Salama al-Baṣrī (d. 167/783) was the author of certain defective ḥadīth.

¹⁶ The somewhat uncommon term “*taswiya*” refers to the practice of omitting transmitters from isnāds, either because they were weak or to shorten the isnād for the sake of elevation (*‘ulūw*). For a complete definition, see Ibn Ḥajar, *Nukat*, 2:260–61.

¹⁷ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Majrūhīn*, 1:200–1 (see also 1:74, 94); Dhahabī, *Mizān*, 1:332–33; id., *Siyar*, 8:523–24; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 1:476–77.

Yahyā b. Maʿīn went to ʿAffān¹⁸ to hear the books of Ḥammād b. Salama from him. [ʿAffān] said to him, "Have you not heard them from anyone else?" [Yahyā b. Maʿīn] said, "Yes, seventeen people have transmitted to me from Ḥammād b. Salama." [ʿAffān] said, "By God, I will not transmit to you." [Yahyā b. Maʿīn] said, "This is a mistake. I will go to al-Baṣra and hear [them] from Tabūdhakī."¹⁹ [ʿAffān] said, "[That is] your business." Yahyā b. Maʿīn went to al-Baṣra and Tabūdhakī said to him, "Have you not heard these books from anyone?" Yahyā b. Maʿīn said, "I heard them in their entirety from seventeen people and you are the eighteenth." [Tabūdhakī] said, "Why do you do this?" [Yahyā b. Maʿīn] replied, "Ḥammād b. Salama used to make mistakes and I want to distinguish the errors he made from those which others made. If I see that his students unanimously transmit something [from him], I know that the error originates from Ḥammād himself. If they unanimously transmit something from him and one of them says [something] in disagreement with them, I know that the error originates from [that student] and not from Ḥammād. Thus, I distinguish between his own errors and the errors attributed to him [by his students]."²⁰

In another report, Yahyā b. Maʿīn recounts a conversation that he had with Ismāʿīl b. ʿUlayya (d. 194/809) regarding the latter's status as a transmitter.

Ismāʿīl b. ʿUlayya said to me, "How are my ḥadīth?" I said, "You are accurate in ḥadīth (*mustaqīm al-ḥadīth*)." He said to me, "How did you learn that?" I said to him, "I compared [your ḥadīth] with some of the ḥadīth of the people (*ʿaraḍnā bihā aḥādīth al-nās*). I saw that they were accurate (*mustaqīma*)." He said, "Praise be to God," and kept saying it and praising his Lord until he entered the house of Bishr b. Maʿrūf with me—or he said, "the house of Abu ʿl-Bakhtarī."²¹

¹⁸ Abū ʿUthmān ʿAffān b. Muslim al-Ṣaffār lived in Baghdad and died around 220/835; Bukhārī, *al-Taʾrīkh al-kabīr*, 4(1):72; *Jarḥ*, 3(2):30; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 7:230–35.

¹⁹ The Baṣran Mūsā b. Ismāʿīl al-Tabūdhakī (d. 223/838) was regarded as one of the best transmitters from Ḥammād b. Salama; *Jarḥ*, 4(1):136; Dhahabī, *Mīzān*, 4:200; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 10:333–35.

²⁰ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Majrūḥīn*, 1:32; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 7:456. (This passage is also translated in M.M. Azami, *Methodology and Literature*, 52–53.) In the *Taqdīm* (p. 315), Ibn Abī Ḥātim records a report in which Yahyā b. Maʿīn is depicted as going to Tabūdhakī to hear the *ḥadīth* of Ḥammād b. Salama after hearing it from seventeen other transmitters. Ibn Abī Ḥātim, however, gives as Yahyā b. Maʿīn's motivation his desire to obtain the work in its most complete form. He says, "By [doing] that, he desired [to obtain] the additions in the possession of some of [his students], because Ḥammād b. Salama transmitted ḥadīth to them from memory (*min ḥifẓihī*). One thing after another occurred to him and he related it. Few were those who studied with him who did not have something that the others did not."

²¹ Yahyā b. Maʿīn, *Maʿrifat al-rijāl*, ed. Muḥammad Muṭīʿ al-Ḥāfiẓ and Ghazwa Budayr, 2 vols. (Damascus, 1305/1985), 2:39.

When Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn compared the transmissions of Ibn ʿUlayya with those of other scholars, he was able to see that they matched closely and, on this basis, drew the conclusion that he was a reliable transmitter.

Finally, we may cite the case which Ibn Ḥibbān makes the paradigm for all personality criticism. Concerned here is a ḥadīth which Ḥammād b. Salama was alone in transmitting from his teacher Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī (d. 131/748).

If we go to Ḥammād b. Salama, we see that he transmitted a report from Ayyūb [al-Sakhtiyānī] from [Muḥammad] b. Sīrīn from Abū Hurayra from the Prophet. We do not find that report with any other student of Ayyūb. [However,] we are obliged to refrain from impugning [Ḥammād b. Salama] and compare [it] with what his contemporaries transmitted (*wa-l-ʿtibār bi-mā rawā ghayruhū min aqrānihī*). It is necessary that we first examine this report: Did several of [Ḥammād's] students transmit it from him or only one, all by himself? If it is found that several of his students transmitted it [from him], then it is known that Ḥammād indeed transmitted it. [But,] if it is found to be the transmission of a single weak [transmitter] from Ḥammād, then it is ascribed to that transmitter and not to him.

When it is established that [Ḥammād] did transmit from Ayyūb something which no one else did, then it is necessary to pause and weakness should not be ascribed to him [yet]. Rather, it should be ascertained: Has any reliable transmitter other than Ayyūb transmitted this report from Ibn Sīrīn? If that is found, then it is known that the report has a source from which it derives.

If what we described is not found, it is then ascertained: Did any reliable transmitter other than Ibn Sīrīn transmit this report from Abū Hurayra? If that is found, then it is known that the report has a source.

If what we said is not found, then it is ascertained: Does anyone relate this report from the Prophet other than Abū Hurayra? If that is found, it is established that the report has a source. When that is absent and the report is itself at variance with the three sources [i.e. Ibn Sīrīn, Abū Hurayra and the Prophet], then it is known that the report is undoubtedly a forgery and that the transmitter who was alone in transmitting it [at some point in the chain of transmission] is the one who forged it.²²

²² Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ Ibn Ḥibbān*, ed. Aḥmad Muḥammad Shākir, 1 vol. (All published? Cairo, 1952), 1:117–18; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 247.

Ibn Ḥibbān wanted to know whether Ḥammād b. Salama had forged a certain ḥadīth he claimed to have received from his teacher Ayyūb al-Sakhtiyānī. That Ḥammād was the only one of Ayyūb's students to transmit the ḥadīth suggested that he may have made it up. Ibn Ḥibbān investigated the question in a very systematic manner. First, he sought to determine whether the ḥadīth was perhaps forged by one of Ḥammād's students and falsely ascribed to him. If only one of Ḥammād's students transmitted the ḥadīth from him, Ibn Ḥibbān was content to let the matter lie and regard that student as the forger. However, if several of Ḥammād's students transmitted the ḥadīth, there could be no doubt that Ḥammād actually taught it. Ibn Ḥibbān then turned his attention to the history of the transmission of the ḥadīth prior to the time of Ḥammād. He wanted to know whether there were any alternate lines of transmission for the ḥadīth which did not pass through Ayyūb and Ḥammād. If one could have been found, it would have shown that it was impossible for Ḥammād to have forged the ḥadīth. Perhaps Ayyūb was not the only student of Ibn Sīrīn to transmit the ḥadīth; perhaps Ibn Sīrīn was not the only student of the Companion Abū Hurayra to transmit the ḥadīth; perhaps Abū Hurayra was not the only Companion to transmit the ḥadīth from the Prophet. If alternate lines of transmission could have been found, the lines of transmission of the ḥadīth would no longer converge on Ḥammād and he could not be considered the forger. If not, the conclusion was inescapable that Ḥammād had forged it.

2. *Extrinsic Considerations*

It is worth adding at this juncture that in general the critics paid little attention to anecdotal information concerning the reliability of transmitters. Ibn Ḥibbān says that the views of a scholar's neighbors and fellow townsmen are immaterial in determining his reliability as a transmitter. That, he says, can only be determined by someone versed in the art of ḥadīth.²³ Considerations extrinsic to the transmitter's performance as a transmitter had little or no influence on the formulation of the critic's judgement. It is interesting to note, for instance, that we find no transmitter rejected solely for consuming alcohol, a practice which would seem to combine impiety and

²³ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:112-13.

the potential for faulty transmission in an unsurpassable fashion. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal is known to history as a paragon of strictness. Yet we find him lightly dismissing the wine-drinking of some Kūfans as a lapse which did not harm their competence in the transmission of ḥadīth.²⁴ When the students of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal asked him about the imbibing of Khalaf b. Hishām al-Bazzār (150/767–229/844), he said, “I have heard that about him. But, by God, he is reliable and trustworthy in my opinion, whether he drank or not.”²⁵ It was well known that the unimpeachable al-‘Abbās b. Muḥammad al-Dūrī was a drinker. He conducted his classes with wine jugs in view and on occasion became so intoxicated that he walked into walls.²⁶ Wakī‘ b. al-Jarrāḥ, upon whom Ibn Abī Ḥātim bestows the rank of critic in the *Taqdima*, taught ḥadīth only as long as the supply of wine held out.²⁷

In general we find that a scholar’s failure to study with a transmitter is attributed to extrinsic considerations in those cases where the ḥadīth of the transmitter in question were more or less sound. This failure was often interpreted as the scholar’s rejection of the transmitter and was therefore inexplicable in terms of technical criticism. In essence, the reports attempt to explain why someone did not study with a reliable transmitter one had every reason to expect him to transmit from. The sources give different reasons for Shu‘ba not transmitting from Abu ‘l-Zubayr Muḥammad b. Muslim b. Tadrus al-Makkī (d. 128/745). In one report, Shu‘ba is said to have rejected him because he had slandered a fellow Muslim and, in another, because he gave short weight when selling goods.²⁸ According to yet another story, Shu‘ba advised Suwayd b. ‘Abd al-‘Azīz not to study

²⁴ *Jarḥ*, 1(1):26. The Kūfans regarded wine-drinking as permissible. Wakī‘ b. al-Jarrāḥ said, “If you see a Baṣran drinking wine (*nabīdh*), suspect him [for it]. If you see a Kūfan drinking wine, do not suspect him [for it].” When asked the reason for this, he replied, “The Kūfan drinks it as an act of faith and the Baṣran abstains from it as an act of faith;” Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 1:278. See also G.H.A. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, 65. ‘Abd Allāh b. Idrīs does say, “No attention is paid to the ḥadīth of anyone who drinks any intoxicating beverage at all,” (Ibn Ḥibbān, *Majrūḥīn*, 1:23) and al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī also feels that drinking wrecks integrity (*Kifāya*, 105).

²⁵ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta’rīkh*, 8:326.

²⁶ See above, p. 21.

²⁷ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Ta’rīkh*, 13:472; al-Malik al-Mu‘azzam, *Sahm*, 128.

²⁸ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kifāya*, 115; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 5:381–82; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 9:441–42.

with him since he had seen him doing his prayers incorrectly.²⁹ The fact is that Abu 'l-Zubayr al-Makkī's ḥadīth were authentic according to the standards of the critics and he was rated as reliable by many of them. Tirmidhī, for instance, regards Shu'ba's rejection of him as anomalous.³⁰ It is telling that a report recorded by Fasawī has the duped Suwayd express his regret for having followed the advice of Shu'ba: "Shu'ba tricked me. He said to me, 'Do not transmit from him. I saw him doing his prayers incorrectly.' I wish I had never seen Shu'ba!"³¹ Because Shu'ba's failure to transmit from Abu 'l-Zubayr al-Makkī was inexplicable, a huge area for speculation over its cause was opened.

Analogous to this case is Mālik's rejection of Muḥammad b. Ishāq. How was it that Mālik failed to transmit from his famous fellow townsman?³² His ḥadīth were acceptable, so that could not have been the reason. In various sources we find this puzzling circumstance attributed to a number causes, all utterly unconnected with his competence as a transmitter. These mostly concern personal disputes between Mālik and him or peccadillos committed by him which could be expected to offend someone so punctiliously moral as Mālik must have been, but which carried no weight with Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his fellows. Examples of this phenomenon could easily be multiplied.³³

Needless to say, the critics ignored such reports in the formulation of their judgements. In response to the charge that Abu 'l-Zubayr al-Makkī was dishonest in weighing goods, Ibn Ḥibbān stated that this did not constitute an adequate cause for rejecting a transmitter.³⁴ Elsewhere, he dismisses Shu'ba's reasoning along such lines as a "personal habit" (*da'b*).³⁵ When Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal was asked why Mālik did not transmit from Sa'd b. Ibrāhīm (d. ca. 126/743), he said that there was a "story" (*qiṣṣa*) between them. He went on to say, "It does not matter to Sa'd that Mālik did not transmit from him."³⁶

²⁹ *Taqdima*, 151; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 5:382–83.

³⁰ Tirmidhī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 13:331–32.

³¹ Fasawī, *Ma'rifa*, 2:780.

³² See above, p. 81.

³³ Another interesting instance from the *Taqdima* (pp. 153, 172) is Shu'ba's rejection of al-Minhāl b. 'Amr, which should be studied in conjunction with *Jarḥ*, 4(1):356–57 and Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 10:319–21.

³⁴ Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 9:442.

³⁵ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Majrūhīn*, 1:30.

³⁶ Fasawī, *Ma'rifa*, 1:411, 3:31. One story has it that Sa'd b. Ibrāhīm admon-

C. Judgements on Transmitters

1. Absolute Appraisals

The investigations of the critics into the reliability of transmitters resolved themselves into three basic kinds of judgements, absolute, relative and conditional; and examples of all three are found in the *Taqdima*. The most common kind of these was the absolute. Most often absolute appraisals consist of a few words evaluating the transmitter's entire activity, usually taking the form "X is reliable," "Y is weak," etc. The terminology varies greatly and different critics preferred different terms. Even when the critics did happen to use the same term there is nothing to suggest that they meant the same thing by it, except in a general sense.³⁷ At the earliest stages it does not appear that the locutions used for indicating the general reliability of transmitters possessed technical meanings, although terms like "*mudallis*" (one who doctors isnāds) and "*kadhhdhāb*" (liar), which describe more or less specific behaviors, naturally did to some extent.

Some critics categorized transmitters by grades. The earliest of these efforts were abstract, not attempting to relate the grades of transmitters to the terminology employed by the critics. In the *Taqdima*, Ibn Abī Ḥātim divides transmitters into five categories:

- 1) There is the trustworthy, careful, scrupulous, accurate, discerning and critical [transmitter] of ḥadīth. There is no difference of opinion about him. His personality criticism may be relied upon. Both his ḥadīth and his criticism of transmitters may be cited as proof texts.
- 2) The [transmitter] who is upright on his own, trustworthy in his relation, veracious in his transmitting, scrupulous in his religion and careful and accurate in his ḥadīth. He is the upright [transmitter]

ished Mālik once and Mālik took offense and another maintains that Sa'd cast doubt on Mālik's genealogy, thus earning his ire; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 3:465. The latter offense is also given as a reason for Mālik's rejection of Ibn Ishāq; Ibn 'Abd al-Barr, *Intiqā'*, 11. These reasons appear to float fairly freely. Some of the unsavory characteristics of Abu 'l-Zubayr al-Makkī are attributed to Muḥammad b. al-Zubayr al-Tamīmī. In one report, Suwayd b. 'Abd al-'Azīz feels tricked by Shu'ba's cautioning him against Muḥammad b. al-Zubayr because he performed his prayers incorrectly (Ibn Shāhīn, *Ta'rikh asmā' al-thiqāt minman nuqila 'anhum al-'ilm*, ed. 'Abd al-Mu'ī Amīn Qal'ajī, Beirut, 1406/1986, 278) and in another Shu'ba rejects him for slandering someone (Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 9:167).

³⁷ This is discussed by Leonard Librande in the article "The Supposed Homogeneity of Technical Terms in *Ḥadīth* Study," *The Muslim World* 72 (1982):34–50 and in his Ph.D. dissertation, *Contrasts in the Two Earliest Manuals of 'Ulūm al-Ḥadīth: The Beginnings of the Genre* (McGill University, 1976), esp. pp. 197–213.

- whose ḥadīth are cited as proof texts and he is regarded as reliable on his own.
- 3) The veracious, scrupulous and trustworthy [transmitter] whom the discerning critics have accepted, [although] he sometimes makes mistakes. His ḥadīth may be cited as proof texts.
 - 4) The veracious and scrupulous [but] neglectful [transmitter] in whom misapprehension, error, mistake and negligence predominate. His ḥadīth treating matters of an inspirational, ascetic or edifying character (*al-taghrīb wa-'l-tarhīb wa-'l-zuhd wa-'l-ādāb*) may be recorded. His ḥadīth in religious law (*al-ḥalāl wa-'l-ḥarām*) may not be used as proof texts.
 - 5) A fifth [transmitter] who has attached himself to them [i.e. the previously mentioned grades of transmitters] and has insinuated himself into their number. He is not honest or veracious. He is someone whose falsehood has become apparent to the critics among them who have knowledge of transmitters and experience. His ḥadīth are abandoned and his transmission is rejected.³⁸

Other critics formulated their own descriptive hierarchies which employed different terms and different numbers of levels.³⁹

2. *Relative Appraisals*

Relative judgements on transmitters are extremely common in the *Taqdima* and the books of personality criticism. These judgements nearly always deal with transmitters who shared a common teacher and the form that these comparisons most often take is: X is more reliable than Y in the ḥadīth of their teacher Z. Al-‘Abbās al-Dūrī asked his teacher Yaḥyā b. Ma‘īn about the students of ‘Amr b. Dīnār:

I asked Yaḥyā b. Ma‘īn about the ḥadīth of Shu‘ba from ‘Amr b. Dīnār, those of [Sufyān] al-Thawrī from ‘Amr b. Dīnār and those of Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna from ‘Amr b. Dīnār. He said, “Sufyān b. ‘Uyayna is the most knowledgeable in the ḥadīth of ‘Amr b. Dīnār and he is [also] more knowledgeable in [the ḥadīth] of ‘Amr b. Dīnār than Hammād b. Zayd.” (*Taqdima*, 37)

³⁸ *Taqdima*, 10. Ibn Abī Hātim is concerned here with the transmitters in the generations after the Companions and Followers. He accepts all of the members of the first two generations of Muslims as reliable.

³⁹ E.g. the three level arrangements ascribed to ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī and Muslim. For that of the former, see Muslim, *Tamyīz*, 132; *Ḥaṣṣ*, 1.1:38; ‘Uqaylī, *Ḍu‘afā’*, 1:13. For Muslim’s, see Muslim, *Tamyīz*, 132; id., *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:3–6; G.H.A. Juynboll, “Muslim’s Introduction,” 266–70.

In discussing the students of Muḥammad b. Sīrīn, 'Alī b. al-Madīnī stated:

"No one is more reliable in [the ḥadīth of] Ibn Sīrīn than Ayyūb [al-Sakhtiyānī] and Ibn 'Awn."⁴⁰ He was asked, "And if they disagree [on a particular ḥadīth from Ibn Sīrīn]?" He replied, "Ayyūb is more reliable."⁴¹

The critics reached such judgements by comparing the ḥadīth transmitted by the scholars in question. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal records his use of this procedure to determine whether Sufyān b. 'Uyayna or Mālik was the best student of Zuhri:

I was with 'Alī b. al-Madīnī and [the question of] who is the most trustworthy transmitter from Zuhri came up. 'Alī said, "Sufyān b. 'Uyayna." I said, "Mālik, he made fewer mistakes [in the ḥadīth he transmitted] from Zuhri. Ibn 'Uyayna made mistakes in about twenty ḥadīth [he transmitted] from Zuhri, in this ḥadīth and that ḥadīth." I mentioned eighteen of them and said, "Bring the ones Mālik made mistakes in." He brought two or three ḥadīth. I went back and examined the ḥadīth Ibn 'Uyayna made mistakes in and in fact there were more than twenty of them.⁴²

Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal noted that Mālik and Ibn 'Uyayna each transmitted about three hundred ḥadīth from Zuhri.

The critics achieved a synthesis of the absolute and relative judgements when they began to integrate the terminology employed in assessing transmitter reliability into their descriptive hierarchies of transmitter competence. This way each particular term of appraisal was related to all others on a rigorously hierarchical basis and thus each came to possess a technical meaning. The first critic to formulate such a hierarchy was Ibn Abī Ḥātim. In the introductory chapter to *Farḥ* (1[1]:37), he presents an eight-level guide to the terminology employed in the work. This hierarchy may be represented as follows:

⁴⁰ 'Abd Allāh b. 'Awn al-Baṣrī (d. 151/768); Bukhārī, *al-Ta'rikh al-kabīr*, 3(1):163; *Farḥ*, 2(2):130–31; Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhīb*, 346–49.

⁴¹ 'Alī b. al-Madīnī, *Ilal*, 64.

⁴² Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *Kitāb al-Ilal wa-ma'rifat al-rijāl*, ed. Talāt Koçığit and İsmail Cerrahoğlu (Ankara, 1963), 370; Ḥāzīmī, *Shurūṭ*, 39; Dhahabī, *Mīzān*, 2:170; Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ*, 166.

Reliable Transmitters

- 1) "Reliable" (*thiqa*) or "accurate and trustworthy" (*mutqin thabat*): His ḥadīth may be cited as proof texts.
- 2) "Veracious" (*ṣadūq*) or "his station is veracity" (*maḥalluhu 'l-ṣidq*)⁴³ or "not bad" (*lā ba'sa bihī*): His ḥadīth may be recorded and examined.
- 3) "Teacher" (*shaykh*): His ḥadīth may be recorded and examined but are inferior to those of the second level scholar.
- 4) "Good in ḥadīth" (*ṣāliḥ al-ḥadīth*): His ḥadīth may be recorded for analysis (*li-'l-ʿtibār*).

Unreliable Transmitters

- 1) "Soft in ḥadīth" (*layyin al-ḥadīth*): His ḥadīth may be recorded and examined for the purpose of analysis.
- 2) "He is not strong" (*laysa bi-qawī*): In regard to the recording of his ḥadīth he is on the same level as the first [rank of unreliable transmitter], but is inferior to them.
- 3) "Weak in ḥadīth" (*da'if al-ḥadīth*): He is inferior to the transmitter of the previous level. However, his ḥadīth are not rejected but are taken into consideration.
- 4) "Abandoned in ḥadīth" (*matrūk al-ḥadīth*), "Wasted in ḥadīth" (*dhāhib al-ḥadīth*) or "liar" (*kadhdhāb*): He is "fallen" (*sāqiṭ*) in ḥadīth and his ḥadīth are not to be recorded.

This scheme found favor with later writers and was regularly cited.⁴⁴

3. *Conditional Appraisals*

Conditional appraisals are rarer than either absolute or relative ones, but are nevertheless quite common. There are a number of appraisals of this type in the *Taqdima* and Ibn Numayr's assessment of 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. 'Abd Allāh b. 'Utba al-Mas'ūdī (d. 160/776) may be cited as an example.

Mas'ūdī was reliable. At the end of his life, he became mixed-up (*bi-akharatin ikhtalata*). 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī and Yazīd b. Hārūn⁴⁵ heard some mixed-up ḥadīth from him. What the early students (*al-shuyūkh*) heard from him is alright. (*Taqdima*, 322; *Jarḥ*, 2[2]:251)

⁴³ For further explanation of this particular designation, see *Jarḥ*, 1(1):133.

⁴⁴ E.g. al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kifāya*, 23; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 307–10. For remarks, see James Robson, "The Standards Applied by Muslim Traditionists," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 43 (1961):464–65; id., *ET*², s.v. al-Djarḥ wa 'l-Ta'dīl; Muhammad Abdul Rauf, "Ḥadīth Literature-1: The Development of the Science of Ḥadīth," *The Cambridge History of Arabic Literature: Arabic Literature to the Umayyad Period*, 284.

⁴⁵ Abū Khalīd Yazīd b. Hārūn al-Wāsiṭī (118/736–206/821); Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:40.

As is shown here, the conditional appraisal makes a distinction in the reliability of a scholar's transmissions according to when they were made. In this case, the early transmissions of Mas'ūdī were considered reliable, but those dating from after the time he became mixed-up were considered unreliable. The critics regarded a number of circumstances as possessing a potentially harmful effect on the reliability of an individual's transmissions, including the loss of eyesight, senility and the destruction of the materials on which he had written his ḥadīth. All of these came under the general heading of "*ikhtilāf*" (to become mixed-up).

Those transmitters who went blind or lost their books were forced to rely solely on their memories. The critics of this era had little confidence in the human memory and saw transmission from memory as the source of many errors. In particular, the critics feared that unscrupulous students would victimize those who transmitted without the benefit of written materials by means of a procedure called *talqīn* or "prompting." The unscrupulous students brought collections of ḥadīth to their teacher, claiming that they were the teacher's very own, copied by an earlier student. These they presented to him and asked his permission to transmit them under his name. Apparently lacking even the vaguest notion of what he used to teach, the transmitter happily obliged them. The students' books were invariably filled with defective ḥadīth.

The onset of senility or dotage, like the forced reliance on memory, was also believed to lead a transmitter into error.⁴⁶ Sa'īd b. Abī 'Arūba (d. between 148/767 and 157/773) was probably the most famous dotard among the scholars of ḥadīth. His transmissions dating from before his dotage were normally considered sound. Abū Ḥātim declares, "Sa'īd b. Abī 'Arūba was reliable before he became senile" (*qabla an yakhtalī*).⁴⁷ However, his transmissions made after the onset of his senility were to be rejected. According to Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, one specific manifestation of Sa'īd b. Abī 'Arūba's senility was his confusing the names in isnāds.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ An exception to this pattern was Hammām b. Yaḥyā (d. 164/780), who, according to Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, became more reliable when a prolonged infirmity befell him because he began to rely more heavily on his notes; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *ʿIlal*, 111; Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ*, 415.

⁴⁷ *Jarḥ*, 2(1):66; Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhīb*, 4:64.

⁴⁸ Ibn Hajar, *Tahdhīb*, 4:65.

Theoretically, it should have been possible to judge the reliability of a particular transmission on the basis of whether it preceded or followed the advent of the teacher's disability. In discussing Muḥammad b. al-Faḍl al-Sadūsī (d. 214/829), known as "Ārim," Ibn Ḥibbān states that one may accept the transmissions of a reliable teacher who became senile if it can be determined that the transmissions were obtained before the onset of his senility; the rest have to be rejected:

[Muḥammad b. al-Faḍl al-Sadūsī] became senile at the end of his life and [his mind] went bad (*ikhtalaṭa fī ākhir ʿumrihī wa-taghayyara*) to such an extent that he no longer knew what he was transmitting, so many rejected ḥadīth occurred in his relation. What his early students relate from him before senility befell him—if it is known that their audition of him preceded [his mind] going bad—[that is,] if someone cites it as a proof text after ascertaining what I mentioned, then I hope he will not be impugned for doing that. As for the relation of his later students from him, it is necessary to avoid it under all circumstances. If the audition of his early students of him cannot be distinguished from that of his late ones, everything is to be rejected and none of it may be adduced as a proof text. This is the treatment for all of those whose [mind] went bad and who became senile at the end of their life, if they were veracious before becoming senile and were known for their recording ḥadīth in writing, extensive collecting and exactitude.⁴⁹

The critics on occasion tried to assign an exact date to the onset of a transmitter's disability, but often this proved problematic. Six different dates between the years 132/749 and 150/767 were proposed for the onset of dotage in Saʿīd b. Abī ʿArūba.⁵⁰ Ostensibly the critic should have been able to use the date, if one could be arrived at, to determine whether specific students transmitted from him before or after his reliability had become impaired. However, the truth is that the critics rarely knew the exact date a particular student studied with a teacher. So, from a practical standpoint, the date of the onset of a transmitter's dotage or other disability was useless.

Nevertheless, the critics professed knowledge of which students studied with a transmitter before the onset of his disability and which studied after. It is in this that we find an insight into the nature of

⁴⁹ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Majrūhīn*, 2:294–95. See also id., *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:121–22.

⁵⁰ Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 4:63–66.

the conditional appraisal. One may imagine that collation of ḥadīth had no place here. Unlike absolute or relative appraisals, which are more clearly derived from the examination of the transmitter's ḥadīth, the conditional appraisal appears to be based on factual historical knowledge since it refers to a specific event in time, e.g. the onset of senility in the transmitter, the loss of his books. Close examination, however, shows that this is usually not the case and that the presence of a disability warranting a conditional judgement was often deduced from the scrutiny of the ḥadīth transmitted from the scholar in question. The evidence of these disabilities was the presence of large variations from student to student in the reliability of the scholar's transmissions. Whether a given student studied with him before or after the onset of his disability was determined by an examination of the quality of that student's transmissions. Those students whose transmissions were sound were assumed to have studied with him before and those whose transmissions were defective, after.⁵¹

Because all of the possible disabilities manifest themselves in a similar fashion in the transmitter's material, that is in a palpable variation in the quality of his transmissions, presumably from student to student, it is not surprising that there are instances where the critics do not agree on exactly which particular one a transmitter suffered from. Most critics felt that there was some variation in the reliability of the transmissions of the different students of the Egyptian judge 'Abd Allāh b. Lahī'a (ca. 97/715–ca. 174/790). The majority of these believed that he had lost his written materials in a fire in either 169/785 or 170/786.⁵² Those students who recorded sound ḥadīth

⁵¹ For an explicit example of this kind of reasoning, see Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's discussion of Abū Qatāda in Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *ʿIlal*, 230–31; *Jarḥ*, 2(2):191–92; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 6:66.

⁵² Ishāq b. 'Isā gives the date as 169/785; Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *ʿIlal*, 237; Ibn 'Adī, *Kāmil*, 4:1463; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 8:13; id., *Mizān*, 2:477; id., *Tadhkira*, 1:238 (where his name is given as "Ishāq b. Mūsā"); Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 5:376. The date of 170/786 is given by Yahyā b. Bukayr; Bukhārī, *al-Ta'rikh al-saghīr*, ed. Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm Zāyid, 2 vols. (Beirut, 1406/1986), 2:189; id., *al-Ta'rikh al-kabīr*, 3(1):183; *Jarḥ*, 2(2):146; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Majrūhīn*, 2:11 (without reference to Yahyā b. Bukayr); Ibn 'Adī, *Kāmil*, 4:1462; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 8:18; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 5:376. There are many other references to the fire that do not give an exact date. A report from 'Abd Allāh b. al-Mubārak seems to place Ibn Lahī'a's downfall considerably earlier than 169/785 or 170/786. In 179/795, he stated that the transmissions of those who studied with Ibn Lahī'a in the preceding twenty years were worthless, without specifically mentioning the fire; Fasawī, *Ma'rifat*, 2:185; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Majrūhīn*, 1:76; 2:12.

had studied with him before the fire, at a time when he still had his notes to teach from. Those whose transmissions were defective studied with him after the fire, when he had only his memory to rely upon. ‘Amr b. ‘Alī al-Fallās (ca. 160/776–249/863) says,

The books of ‘Abd Allāh b. Lahī‘a were consumed in a fire. So, those who wrote from him before that, like [‘Abd Allāh] b. al-Mubārak and ‘Abd Allāh b. Yazīd al-Muqri’, are more correct than those who wrote [from him] after the books were destroyed by fire, when he was weak in ḥadīth. (*Farḥ*, 2[2]:147)

The mistakes entered his transmissions, according to al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī (321/933–404/1014), when Ibn Lahī‘a continued teaching from memory after the destruction of his books.⁵³ However, the famous historian and Qur’ān commentator Ṭabarī (224/839–310/923) maintained that it was ‘Abd Allāh b. Lahī‘a’s senility (i.e. *ikhtalaṭa ‘aqluhū fī ākhiri ‘umrihī*) which accounted for the variation in the reliability of his transmissions.⁵⁴ ‘Uthmān b. Ṣāliḥ al-Sahmī (144/761–219/834), who styled himself “the person most knowledgeable of the cause of the disability of Ibn Lahī‘a,” said that not all of the books of Ibn Lahī‘a were consumed in the fire and that in fact his original notes escaped.⁵⁵ According to him, Ibn Lahī‘a’s problem began later when he was riding an ass, suffered a stroke and fell off.⁵⁶

Other scholars, while aware of the deficiencies of Ibn Lahī‘a’s transmissions, declined to introduce a strict chronological element into the discussion and their assessments differ primarily in the amount of culpability they assign to Ibn Lahī‘a. When Abū Zur‘a was asked about the transmissions of his early students, he said,

His late and early [transmissions] are equal. However, Ibn al-Mubārak and Ibn Wahb used to track down his original notes and then wrote from him. The rest used to write [directly] from the teacher, and Ibn Lahī‘a was not precise. (*Farḥ*, 2[2]:147–48)

‘Abd Allāh b. al-Mubārak and ‘Abd Allāh b. Wahb (125/743–197/812) were among those whose ḥadīth from Ibn Lahī‘a were generally

⁵³ Al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī, *Su’ālāt Mas’ūd ibn ‘Alī al-Sijzī ma’a as’ilat al-Baghdādīyīn ‘an aḥwāl al-rijāl*, ed. Muwaffaq b. ‘Abd Allāh b. ‘Abd al-Qādir (Beirut, 1308/1988), 135; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 5:378.

⁵⁴ Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 5:379.

⁵⁵ Dhahabī, *Mīzān*, 2:476; id., *Siyar*, 8:13; id., *Tadhkira*, 239; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 5:376.

⁵⁶ Dhahabī, *Mīzān*, 2:476; id., *Siyar*, 8:24–25.

considered reliable. Elsewhere, Abū Zur‘a explicitly rejects the notion that Ibn Lahī‘a’s books were consumed by a fire and says that he was merely careless (*radī‘ al-ḥifẓ*).⁵⁷ Aḥmad b. Šālīḥ al-Miṣrī—who was a student of Ibn Lahī‘a’s secretary, Abu ‘l-Aswad al-Naḍr b. ‘Abd al-Jabbār (145/762–219/834)—also explicitly rejected the notion that there was any difference between the early and late transmissions of Ibn Lahī‘a. He claimed that Ibn Lahī‘a used to read to his students, some of whom took accurate notes, while others did not write the ḥadīth down on the spot, but instead waited until later and consequently spoiled them. At some date, Ibn Lahī‘a stopped reading from his books. Those who sought his ḥadīth had to copy them from his earlier students and these they read back to him. The quality of the ḥadīth of these later students depended entirely on the accuracy of the notes they copied.⁵⁸ The secretary Abu ‘l-Aswad, himself, accused his employer of allowing any ḥadīth brought to him to be transmitted under his name.⁵⁹ Sa‘īd b. Abī Maryam (144/761–224/839), Muḥammad b. Sa‘d (168/784–230/845), Yaḥyā b. Ḥassān (144/761–208/823) and Ibn Khirāsh (d. 283/896) made the same charge.⁶⁰ In one passage Sa‘īd b. Abī Maryam remarks on the similarity of Ibn Lahī‘a’s transmissions from before and after the alleged fire.⁶¹ Elsewhere, he asserts that none of Ibn Lahī‘a’s books was consumed by fire.⁶² For his part, Yaḥyā b. Ma‘īn, who not incidentally held all of Ibn Lahī‘a’s transmissions to be equally unauthentic, explicitly rejected the story of the books being consumed in a fire. He says that he asked about the matter in Egypt and was told that there was no fire.⁶³

⁵⁷ Bardha‘ī, *Du‘afā’*, 346.

⁵⁸ Fasawī, *Ma‘rifā*, 2:184, 434; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 8:18; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 5:376.

⁵⁹ Ibn ‘Adī, *Kāmil*, 4:1462.

⁶⁰ Sa‘īd b. Abī Maryam: Fasawī, *Ma‘rifā*, 2:185; *Farḥ*, 2(2):146; Ibn ‘Adī, *Kāmil*, 4:1462; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 8:15; id., *Mizān*, 2:477. Ibn Sa‘d: Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 8:20; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 5:379. ‘Abd al-Raḥmān b. Yūsuf b. Khirāsh: Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 5:378. Yaḥyā b. Ḥassān: Ibn Ḥibbān, *Majrūḥīn*, 2:13; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 8:24; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 5:378.

⁶¹ *Farḥ*, 2(2):146.

⁶² Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 8:16; id., *Tadhkira*, 238; Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 5:376.

⁶³ Yaḥyā b. Ma‘īn, *Min kalām Abī Zakariyyā’ Yaḥyā ibn Ma‘īn fi ‘l-rijāl*, ed. Aḥmad Nūr Sayf (Damascus, [1979]), 97, 108, 115; id., *Ma‘rifat al-rijāl*, 1:67–68, 101, 2:39; *Su‘ālāt Ibn al-Junayd li-Yaḥyā ibn Ma‘īn*, ed. al-Sayyid Abu ‘l-Ma‘āṭī al-Nūrī and Maḥmūd Muḥammad Khalīl (Beirut, 1410/1990), 106; Ibn ‘Adī, *Kāmil*, 4:1463; Ibn Shāhīn, *Kitāb Ta‘rīkh asmā’ al-du‘afā’ wa-‘l-kadhḥabīn*, ed. ‘Abd al-Raḥīm Muḥammad Aḥmad al-Qashqarī (n.p., 1409/1989), 118; Dhahabī, *Siyar*, 8:19.

4. *Sectarian Designations*

Before closing the discussion of the types of technical judgements, we must first examine the sectarian labels applied by the critics to certain transmitters. Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his colleagues were, as a general rule, adherents of what is now called the Ḥanbalite creed. Viewing themselves as the true heirs to the legacy of Muḥammad, they were quick to reject those ḥadīth expressing theological tendencies in conflict with their own. The subjectivity inherent in this did not escape the notice of their rivals,⁶⁴ although a profound sense of righteousness shielded the adherents of ḥadīth from any doubts.

According to the scholars of ḥadīth, both the sectarian (e.g. *ṣāhib hawā*, *ṣāhib al-bidʿa* or *mubtadiʿ*) and heretic (*ẓindīq* or *kāfir*) threatened to undermine the Muslim community with their baleful propensity for forging ḥadīth to support their baseless doctrines. On the subject of heretics, Ibn Hibbān writes:

They embraced heresy and unbelief and did not believe in God and the Day of Judgement. They went to cities and posed as scholars. They attributed forged ḥadīth to [other] scholars and [they pretended to] relate from them, in order to sow doubt and uncertainty in the hearts of [the people of the cities]. They were misguided and they misguided [others]. Reliable transmitters heard from them what they related and transmitted it to those who came after them. [The forged ḥadīth] fell into the hands of the people until they were circulating them among themselves.⁶⁵

Ḥammād b. Zayd was of the opinion that heretics were responsible for the forgery of more than twelve thousand ḥadīth.⁶⁶ Reports purporting to be the confessions of heretics and sectarians form an interesting genre in the literature aimed at impressing upon the student the importance of a critical outlook. Muḥammad b. Saʿīd b. Abī Qays al-Urdunnī, who was executed for heresy by the caliph al-Manṣūr and was distinguished from all other Muḥammad b. Saʿīds by the epithet “the crucified,” unburdened himself, “When I hear a beautiful expression, I do not scruple from making an isnād for it.”⁶⁷ One sectarian who had returned to the orthodox fold warned, “Be careful from whom you take these ḥadīth. Whenever we came up with

⁶⁴ Ibn Qutayba, *Taʾwīl*, 86.

⁶⁵ Ibn Hibbān, *Majrūhīn*, 1:62–63.

⁶⁶ Uqaylī, *Duʿafāʾ*, 1:14; Ibn Shāhīn, *Duʿafāʾ*, 40; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kifāya*, 431.

⁶⁷ *Jarh*, 3(2):263; Abū Zurʿa al-Dimashqī, *Taʾrīkh*, 1:454; Fasawī, *Maʿrifā*, 1:700; Bardhaʿī, *Duʿafāʾ*, 726; Ibn Shāhīn, *Duʿafāʾ*, 168; Abū Nuʿaym al-Iṣbahānī, *Kutāb al-Duʿafāʾ*, ed. Fārūq Ḥammāda (Casablanca, 1403/1984), 137.

a baseless doctrine (*ra'aynā ra'yan*), we made a ḥadīth for it."⁶⁸ Another pleaded, "I adjure you by God not to listen to the sectarians. We used, by God, to relate to you what was erroneous and regard your going astray a good thing."⁶⁹ One reformed Qadarite confessed that he had converted four thousand people to his deviant views by means of forged ḥadīth. He had now taken it upon himself to restore these people to orthodoxy one by one.⁷⁰ There is little doubt that most of these reports are themselves forgeries created with the pious intention of warning students of the dangers posed by sectarian ḥadīth. Nevertheless, they accurately reflect the fears of the critics of ḥadīth.

The critics rejected all of the ḥadīth which at some register were only transmitted by heretics. The sectarians, however, were more troublesome and it does not appear that the critics' treatment of them was consistent in all cases. Sectarians, in contrast to heretics, were often prominent figures in the transmission of ḥadīth. We find a number of important scholars of ḥadīth accused of harboring sectarian tendencies, including Ibn Abī Ḥatīm himself.⁷¹ Most of the critics formally advocated the rejection of all of the ḥadīth of those sectarians who proselytized. A student asked Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal,

"Why did you record [the ḥadīth] of 'Ubayd Allāh b. Mūsā⁷² and then renounce transmitting from him; [yet] you recorded [the ḥadīth] of 'Abd al-Razzāq⁷³ and transmitted from him, while they are members of the same sect?" [Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal] said, "As for 'Abd al-Razzāq, we have not heard *from* him any of what is said *about* him, and we have not read that he was proselytizing for his sect. As for 'Ubayd Allāh, he used to proselytize for his sect and was a spokesman for it. I renounced transmitting from him for that reason."⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Majrūhīn*, 1:82; Ibn 'Adī, *Kāmil*, 1:157; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kifāya*, 123; Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ*, 84.

⁶⁹ *Jarḥ*, 1(1):32; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kifāya*, 128.

⁷⁰ *Jarḥ*, 1(1):32–33.

⁷¹ See above, p. 26, n. 63.

⁷² Abū Muḥammad 'Ubayd Allāh b. Mūsā al-Kūfī (d. 213/828) was named on Abu 'l-Faḍl al-Sulaymānī's list of those who esteemed 'Alī above the first two caliphs (see above, p. 27, n. 63) and the charge is repeated elsewhere (e.g. Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 7:52–53). An extravagantly Shi'ite ḥadīth he is alleged to have transmitted is recorded by Ibn Ḥibbān in *Majrūhīn*, 3:42–43.

⁷³ 'Abd al-Razzāq b. Hammām b. Nāfi' al-Ḥimyarī (d. 211/827; Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:99) is also mentioned in Abu 'l-Faḍl al-Sulaymānī's list. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī records a ḥadīth expressing this doctrine that 'Abd al-Razzāq was alone in teaching in his generation (*Ta'rikh*, 4:195–96).

⁷⁴ Ibn Abī Ya'lā, *Tabaqāt*, 1:182. This notion is expressed repeatedly, e.g. Yaḥyā b. Ma'īn, *Ta'rikh*, 4:139; Ibn Ḥibbān, *Majrūhīn*, 1:82; id., *Thiqāt*, 6:140–41.

The idea was that if a scholar transmitted ḥadīth supporting sectarian beliefs, all of his ḥadīth were to be rejected. If he was rumored to be a sectarian, but there was no evidence that he transmitted sectarian ḥadīth, then his ḥadīth could be accepted. The problem with this approach was that in most cases the critics learned of the sectarian tendencies of transmitters only from the ḥadīth they taught advocating their obnoxious beliefs.⁷⁵ That is to say that there were very few sectarian transmitters who could not be regarded as proselytizers.

It was recognized that this course, if strictly adhered to, would lead to the rejection of a large number of ḥadīth. Ibn Ḥibbān felt that only the ḥadīth of the leaders of the sectarian movements should be rejected. He said that if the ḥadīth of all sectarians were rejected, "that would be a pretext for abandoning all ḥadīth, to the extent that nothing but a very small number of ḥadīth would come into our hands."⁷⁶ The stance of Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān appears to have been even more permissive. ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī reports a discussion he had with him:

I told Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd that ʿAbd al-Raḥmān [b. Maḥdī] had said, "Reject whoever was a leader in innovation and a proselytizer." Yaḥyā said, "What do you do with Qatāda?"⁷⁷ What do you do with Abū Dāwūd and ʿUmar b. Dharr?"⁷⁸ and he enumerated a large number of people. Then he said, "If [ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī] rejected this kind [of transmitter], he rejected many people."⁷⁹

It appears that in practice the critics rejected only those ḥadīth of prominent sectarian transmitters which actually supported their sectarian views, rather than all of the ḥadīth ascribed to those transmitters.

⁷⁵ Josef van Ess points out that the propaganda activities of sectarian transmitters were often deduced from the ḥadīth they transmitted; "L'Autorité de la tradition prophétique," 216.

⁷⁶ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:121.

⁷⁷ Qatāda b. Dīʿāma is described as a Qadarite in Fasawī, *Maʿrifā*, 2:277–83 and Abu ʿI-Qāsim al-Balkhī, *Maqālāt al-Islāmīyīn* in Fuʾād Sayyid, *Faḍl al-ʿitizāl*, 88.

⁷⁸ Abū Ḥātim considered ʿUmar b. Dharr b. ʿAbd Allāh (d. 156/772) a Murjiʿite and recommended that his ḥadīth not be cited as proof texts; *Jarḥ*, 3(1):107.

⁷⁹ ʿUqaylī, *Duʿafāʾ*, 1:8. Dr. Christopher Melchert has pointed out to me that "Abū Dāwūd" is replaced by "Ibn Abī Rawwād" in al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kifāya*, 128–29. This is certainly a plausible reading, since I know of no "Abū Dāwūd" who fits the context and Ibn Abī Rawwād was a reasonably prominent transmitter who was considered to be a Murjiʿite.

IV. *The Lines of Transmission Converge on a Single Transmitter*

The second possible circumstance that the critic could encounter in examining the isnāds of a particular ḥadīth was that in one generation a single teacher was alone responsible for the transmission of the text.⁸⁰ As stated above, the critics found it difficult to understand how it could happen that the single transmitter came to possess a ḥadīth not found in the relations of his peers and, as a consequence, they were inclined to doubt its authenticity.

If the teacher who was alone in recording the ḥadīth was considered unreliable on the basis of his other transmissions, the ḥadīth was almost never accepted. Muslim in the introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ* writes,

As for [the transmitter] whom you see betaking himself to someone the equal of Zuhri in regard to prestige and the numerousness of the exact and careful students who transmit his ḥadīth and the ḥadīth of others, or betaking himself to someone the equal of Hishām b. 'Urwa—and their ḥadīth are widespread and commonly possessed by the scholars of ḥadīth, their students having transmitted their ḥadīth from them with agreement on most of them—and [this transmitter] relates from [Zuhri and Hishām b. 'Urwa] or from one of them a number of ḥadīth which none of their [other] students knows and he does not have any of the sound ḥadīth which the other students have, then the acceptance of the ḥadīth of this kind of person is not permissible.⁸¹

Tirmidhi says the same thing in fewer words: "It is not permissible to cite as a proof-text a ḥadīth which is only known from the ḥadīth of someone who is accused or impugned on account of his carelessness and his propensity for making mistakes."⁸²

If, on the other hand, that transmitter had established a good reputation, it was possible that a ḥadīth that he was alone in transmitting could be accepted. To quote Muslim again,

The verdict of the scholars of ḥadīth (*ahl al-'ilm*) and what we know of their practice regarding the acceptance of ḥadīth which a single transmitter is alone in transmitting [requires] that [the single transmitter] conform to the reliable and careful scholars of ḥadīth in some of what they transmit and that he go to great lengths to agree with

⁸⁰ This type of ḥadīth was referred to by a number of different names, see James Robson, "Traditions from Individuals," *Journal of Semitic Studies* 9 (1964):327–40.

⁸¹ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:5–6; G.H.A. Juynboll, "Muslim's Introduction," 269–70.

⁸² Tirmidhi, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 13:311.

them in that. If that is found and then afterward he adds something which his colleagues do not have, his addition should be accepted.⁸³

As an example of this, Tirmidhī discusses two versions of a ḥadīth concerning the alms-tax paid at the end of Ramaḍān (*zakāt al-fīṭr*). The common version of the ḥadīth, transmitted by several reliable scholars, places the obligation of the payment of this tax on all men and women, free and slave (i.e. *‘alā kullī ḥurrin aw ‘abdin dhakarīn aw unthā*), without further qualification. However, there is a version of this ḥadīth which, by the addition of two words, restricts the obligation to Muslims (i.e. *‘alā kullī ḥurrin aw ‘abdin dhakarīn aw unthā min al-muslimīn*). Tirmidhī says that Mālik was the sole reliable scholar to teach this version. However, due to the reputation of Mālik and, one might venture, the cogency of the addition, Tirmidhī was persuaded to accept it as authentic.⁸⁴

V. *The Lines of Transmission Converge on a Gap*

A. *The Ḥadīth with an interrupted Isnād*

The third possible circumstance that the critic could observe in the history of the transmission of a ḥadīth was that there was no recorded transmitter for a particular generation. This kind of ḥadīth represents a special form of the unparalleled ḥadīth, the difference being that in the ordinary unparalleled ḥadīth the identity of the lone transmitter was known and here it was not. Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī says, "The omission of a transmitter from the isnād of a ḥadīth (*irsāl al-ḥadīth*)⁸⁵ leads to ignorance of the identity of its transmitter and it is impossible to know whether he was upright when his identity is unknown."⁸⁶ In the case of the ordinary unparalleled ḥadīth, the

⁸³ Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:5; G.H.A. Juynboll, "Muslim's Introduction," 269.

⁸⁴ Tirmidhī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 13:335–36. Tirmidhī recognizes three different categories of unparalleled ḥadīth and cites Mālik's version as an example of a ḥadīth unparalleled because of an addition in its text. In a general study such as the present one, it is not necessary to examine the various technical distinctions he makes.

⁸⁵ The participial form "*mursal*" originally meant "a ḥadīth with an omission somewhere in its isnād," although with the passage of time it came to be restricted to an omission at the register of the Companions, see L. Librande, "Supposed Homogeneity," 38; G.H.A. Juynboll, "Muslim's Introduction," 296, n. 78. Ibn Ḥajar points out that the verbal form "*arsala*" nevertheless retained the earlier, broader sense, i.e. "to transmit a ḥadīth with an interruption anywhere in its isnād;" *Nuzhat al-nazar fī tawḍīḥ Nukhbat al-fikar* (Benares, 1394/1974), 30.

⁸⁶ *Kifāya*, 387. See also Ibn ‘Abd al-Barr, *Tamhīd*, 1:6.

prestige of that single transmitter could cause the critic to overlook the suspicious circumstance of its transmission. However, this was impossible when the name of the single transmitter was unknown. Thus, the ḥadīth known only with an interrupted isnād was rejected essentially because it was feared that the unnamed transmitter was unreliable. Tirmidhī says,

Whoever impugns the authenticity of a ḥadīth with an interrupted line of transmission (*al-mursal*) does so because those great scholars transmit ḥadīth from reliable and unreliable transmitters. If one of them transmits a ḥadīth and he does not mention all of its transmitters (*arsalahū*), [there exists the possibility that] he may have taken the ḥadīth from an unreliable transmitter.⁸⁷

In describing the threat posed by those who omit transmitters from their isnāds, Ibn Hibbān warns, "Perhaps [the transmitter] heard it from an unreliable person whose mention would void [the authority of] the report, if [his identity] were known and the report ascribed to him."⁸⁸

B. *Types of Transmission*

When confronted with an isnād indicating the transmission of a ḥadīth between two scholars, the question which the critic sought to answer was whether the transmission was direct. The critic's decision was based on a comprehensive examination of the terminology describing the transmission between the two particular scholars in all of the isnāds where their names were juxtaposed. When speaking strictly, the critics made a distinction between relation (i.e. *rawāʿan* or *ḥaddatha ʿan*) and audition (i.e. *samiʿa min*) in describing the connection between two transmitters. Relation was simply the scholar teaching his students a ḥadīth which ultimately came from a certain transmitter. Audition was the scholar's actually obtaining that ḥadīth from the transmitter he named. They were two entirely different acts.⁸⁹

⁸⁷ Tirmidhī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 13:329–30.

⁸⁸ Ibn Hibbān, *al-Sira al-nabawīya*, 30–31; id., *Kitāb al-Thiqāt*, 1:12. See also id., *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:122.

⁸⁹ It is the distinction between *samāʿ* and *riwāya* that accounts for the discrepancy between the small number of ḥadīth certain Companions, like Ibn ʿAbbās, heard from the Prophet and the large number of ḥadīth they transmitted from him. Although a Companion may have only received a small number of ḥadīth personally from the Prophet, this did not preclude his transmission of many more ḥadīth from the Prophet through intermediaries whom he did not choose to name.

A scholar could transmit from another, but, for the possibility of his having received the report through an intermediary to be eliminated, he would have to indicate that he heard him. In the books on personality criticism, statements to the effect that X related from Y but did not hear ḥadīth from him are quite common. Ibn Abī Ḥātim asked his father whether Abū Salām Mamṭūr al-Aswad studied with Thawbān and he replied, "He transmitted ḥadīth from him. I do not know whether or not he heard ḥadīth from him" (*qad rawā 'anhu wa-lā adrī samī'a minhu am lā*).⁹⁰ Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal says of al-Qāsim b. Abī Ayyūb, "Hushaym transmitted from him, [but] he did not hear ḥadīth from him" (*ḥaddatha 'anhu Hushaym wa-lam yasma' minhu*).⁹¹ In his *ʿIlal*, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal gives a list of those whom Saʿīd b. Abī ʿArūba transmitted from, but did not hear. He says, "He transmitted from all of those and did not hear anything at all from them" (*qad ḥaddatha 'an hā'ulā'i kullihim wa-lam yasma' minhum shay'an*).⁹² His contemporary Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn also wrote on this subject⁹³ and, a generation later, the critic Nasāʾī took it upon himself to write a monograph on the matter entitled "Those whom [Saʿīd] b. Abī ʿArūba transmitted ḥadīth from, but did not hear ḥadīth from" (*Dhikr man ḥaddatha 'anhu Ibn Abī ʿArūba wa-lam yasma' minhu*).⁹⁴ When asked whether Qatāda related from Khilās b. ʿAmr, Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn said, "He related [from him]" (*qad rawā*); but it is said that Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn did not specify whether he actually studied with him (i.e. *lam yadhkur Yaḥyā fīhi samā'un am lā*).⁹⁵

Relation was shown by the mere juxtaposition of two names in an isnād, while audition had to be proved. A locution indicating some form of personal contact—such as "*akhbaranā*" (he informed us), "*ḥaddathanā*" (he transmitted to us), "*samī'tu*" (I heard [him saying])—

This point is made clear in the following report from ʿAbd Allāh b. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal: "I counted the ḥadīth in which Ibn ʿAbbās said, 'I heard the Prophet' (*samī'tu 'l-Nabī*), 'I saw the Prophet' (*ra'aytu 'l-Nabī*), and 'I spent the night with the Prophet' (*bittu 'inda 'l-Nabī*). There were between seventy and eighty," Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *ʿIlal*, 253. Thus, we cannot compare the numbers given in reports such as this one and the vast number of ḥadīth ascribed to Ibn ʿAbbās in the major ḥadīth collections and see the difference as the product of the general increase in the number of ḥadīth in circulation.

⁹⁰ *Marāsīl*, 131.

⁹¹ Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *ʿIlal*, 41.

⁹² Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *ʿIlal*, 359; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kifāya*, 358.

⁹³ *Ta'rikh*, 4:93, 99.

⁹⁴ Sezgin, *GAS*, 1:91, 169.

⁹⁵ Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn, *Min kalām Abī Zakariyā' Yaḥyā ibn Maʿīn*, 32–33.

in the isnād of an authentic ḥadīth established that one transmitter heard ḥadīth from another.⁹⁶ In a discussion recorded by his son ‘Abd Allāh, we find that it was in this manner that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal tackled the question of whether Ibn Abī Dhi’b studied with Zuhri. ‘Abd Allāh asked his father,

“Did Ibn Abī Dhi’b hear ḥadīth from Zuhri” (*sami‘a min al-Zuhri*)? [Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal] said, “Yes, he heard him.” I said, “They say that he did not hear Zuhri.” He said, “He heard Zuhri. Yaḥyā b. Sa‘īd related to us from Ibn Abī Dhi’b that he said, ‘Zuhri transmitted to me’ (*haddathani ‘l-Zuhri*).” He mentioned several [other] ḥadīth with “Zuhri transmitted to me” and also “I asked Zuhri” (*sa’altu ‘l-Zuhri*) in them.”⁹⁷

In describing Hammām b. al-Ḥārith’s relationship to Abu ‘l-Dardā’, ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī assures us that, “indeed he met him, [but] did not say ‘I heard [him saying].’”⁹⁸ This procedure was carried to extremes in some cases. This same critic suspected that Makhrama b. Bukayr al-Ashajj did not study with his own father because he nowhere says, “I heard my father.”⁹⁹

C. *The Evaluation of the Cohesion of Isnāds*

One form of evidence vitiating the possibility of two transmitters having studied together was the existence of isnāds containing certain terms interpreted as being indicative of indirect transmission.¹⁰⁰ One of these terms was “*balaghanī ‘an*” (literally: it reached me from [so and so]). Abū Ḥātim says,

Abū Zur‘a and I and a group of our colleagues do not disagree that Zuhri did not hear Abān b. ‘Uthmān at all. How can he have heard ḥadīth from Abān when he says, “*Balaghanī ‘an Abān*”? (*Marāsīl*, 118–19)

We are told that Yaḥyā b. Abī Kathīr said, “Everything for which I say to you “*balaghanī*” is from a written source (*kitāb*).”¹⁰¹ ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī concluded from Muḥammad b. Sīrīn’s use of the passive

⁹⁶ For two late lists of such terms, see al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kifāya*, 288 and Ibn Rushayd, *Sanan*, 17.

⁹⁷ Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, *‘Ilal*, 193.

⁹⁸ ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī, *‘Ilal*, 61.

⁹⁹ Ibn Ḥajar, *Tahdhīb*, 10:71.

¹⁰⁰ For a short list of such terms, see al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī, *Ma‘rifat ‘ulūm al-ḥadīth*, 19.

¹⁰¹ Yaḥyā b. Ma‘īn, *Ta‘rīkh*, 4:351.

verb construction “*nubbiʿtu*” (I was communicated to) that he did not hear ḥadīth from Ibn ‘Abbās.

[In] the ḥadīth of Muḥammad b. Sīrīn from Ibn ‘Abbās, he said, “I was communicated to.” Muḥammad heard them from ‘Ikrima, whom he met during the time of al-Mukhtār. Ibn Sīrīn did not hear anything [directly] from Ibn ‘Abbās. (*Marāsīl*, 116)

The critics also interpreted the term “*kataba ilayya*” (he wrote to me) as proof that two scholars did not study together. When asked whether Qatāda had studied with Saʿīd b. Jubayr, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal said, “No, he says, ‘Saʿīd b. Jubayr wrote to me.’”¹⁰² Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn said, “Yazīd b. Abī Ḥabīb did not hear anything from Zuhri. He said, ‘Ibn Shihāb [al-Zuhri] wrote to me.’ That which [Yazīd] transmits from him is some of what Zuhri wrote to him.”¹⁰³

When the term indicating study was found only in the isnād of a rejected ḥadīth, the critics concluded that the transmitters had not studied together. In discussing the transmission of Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī from the Prophet’s wife ‘Ā’isha, ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī said,

“Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī did not meet any of the Companions of the Prophet.” When asked, “What about ‘Ā’isha?” he replied, “No one relates [that ḥadīth] except Saʿīd b. Abī ‘Arūba—from Abū Ma’shar from Ibrāhīm—and he is weak.”¹⁰⁴

Since the ḥadīth containing the evidence that Ibrāhīm al-Nakhaʿī heard ḥadīth from ‘Ā’isha was not authentic, it could not be cited as proof of their unmediated transmission.

Similarly, evidence of audition was also rejected when a comparison of the lines of transmission of a particular ḥadīth revealed that the term indicating audition was not present in the majority of them. The following is an account of Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal’s resolution of the question of whether ‘Arrāk b. Mālīk studied with ‘Ā’isha (this report is related by al-Athram):

[I was with Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal] and someone brought up the ḥadīth of Khālīd b. Abī ‘l-Ṣalt from ‘Arrāk from ‘Ā’isha from the Prophet: “He said, ‘Turn my seat towards the *qibla*, etc.’” [Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal] said, “[The isnād of this ḥadīth is] interrupted (*mursal*).” I said to him, “[‘Arrāk] said, ‘I heard ‘Ā’isha.’” He rejected that. He said, “‘Arrāk

¹⁰² *Marāsīl*, 109.

¹⁰³ Yaḥyā b. Maʿīn, *Maʿrifat al-rijāl*, 1:126, 2:51.

¹⁰⁴ ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī, *ʿIlal*, 60–61.

b. Mālik? In which isnād is there an indication that he studied with 'Ā'isha (*min ayna sami'a 'Ā'isha*)?¹⁰⁵ What has this to do with him and 'Ā'isha? Rather, he relates from 'Urwa [from 'Ā'isha]. This [attribution] is incorrect. Who related it?" I said, "Ḥammād b. Salama from Khālīd al-Ḥadhdhā'." He said, "More than one [transmitter] related it from Khālīd al-Ḥadhdhā' without 'I heard' in it, and more than one also related it from Ḥammād b. Salama without 'I heard' in it." (*Marāsīl*, 103-4)

Although in one version of the isnād of the ḥadīth the relation between 'Arrāk b. Mālik and 'Ā'isha is indicated by the word "*sami'tu*," which was universally acknowledged as indicating actual study, this word is absent from the other versions. From that Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal concluded that it was a spurious addition, and consequently refused to accept it as proof of audition.

The most common sign that one scholar did not hear ḥadīth from another was the presence of intermediaries between them in another isnād. Abū Ḥātim says,

Muslim b. Abī Maryam from (*'an*) Ibn 'Umar is not uninterrupted (*laysa bi-muttasil*); rather 'Alī b. 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Qārī' comes in between them. (*Marāsīl*, 130)

Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal rejected the possibility of audition between Muṭarrif b. Ṭarīf and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī for the same reason:

Muṭarrif did not hear anything from al-Ḥasan; rather he transmits from Ismā'īl b. Muslim from him. (*Marāsīl*, 132)

Although, as a general rule, the critics were restrictive in acknowledging audition, there were cases where they did not consider the evidence of intervening transmitters decisive. When asked whether Qatāda studied with Yaḥyā b. Ya'mar, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal confessed, "I do not know. He transmitted from him and he transmitted from [another] man from him."¹⁰⁶

It is interesting to note that the critics sometimes determined the Companionship of a transmitter with the Prophet Muḥammad (*ṣuḥba*)

¹⁰⁵ The questions "*min ayna sami'ahū*" and "*min ayna sami'a minhu*" (literally: where did he hear [ḥadīth] from him?) solicit information about the isnād which contains the evidence that one of the transmitters heard the other (and not, for instance, about the city in which the audition was alleged to have taken place). A clear example of this usage is found in Abū Dāwūd al-Sijistānī, *Kitāb Masā'il al-imām Aḥmad*, 298.

¹⁰⁶ *Marāsīl*, 107.

by the examination of isnāds. In discussing Ḥajjāj b. al-Ḥajjāj, Abū Ḥātim says,

Ḥajjāj b. al-Ḥajjāj was not a Companion of the Prophet. One of the things which indicates that is that he transmits from Abū Hurayra and from his father. (*Marāṣil*, 36)

Abū Ḥātim does not consider Ḥajjāj b. al-Ḥajjāj to be a Companion of the Prophet because he related from the Prophet through an intermediary. Ibn Abī Ḥātim recounts the words of his father regarding Saʿīd b. Yazīd's status as a Companion:

"[As for] the Saʿīd b. Yazīd from whom Abu 'l-Khayr transmits that a man came to the Prophet and said, 'Give me some advice.' [The Prophet] said, 'I adjure you to spare a life, as you would spare the life of a good man of your tribe.' We did not know whether he was a Companion or not. 'Abd al-Ḥamīd b. Jaʿfar transmitted the very same ḥadīth from Yazīd b. Abī Ḥabīb from Abu 'l-Khayr from Saʿīd b. Yazīd from one of the Companions." That is, he indicated to us that he was not a Companion. (*Marāṣil*, 48)

Here again we see that it was concluded that a transmitter was not a Companion because a name intervened between his name and the Prophet's in an isnād. Similar to these two examples is Abū Ḥātim's interesting discussion of whether Siyāba b. ʿĀṣim al-Sulamī was a Companion of the Prophet. Although Siyāba transmitted ḥadīth directly from the Prophet, Abū Ḥātim did not regard him as a Companion because a transmitter who did not transmit from the Companions transmitted from him.¹⁰⁷

D. *The Role of Extrinsic Information*

The critics sometimes found themselves confronted with extrinsic information referring to the relationship between two transmitters. For the most part, this information was anecdotal in nature and consisted of incidental references to their contemporaneity or geographical proximity, and as such, rarely explicitly addressed the question of study between the two transmitters. In general the critics were very reluctant to credit anecdotal information which contradicted the indications in the isnāds. At the outset of this discussion, it should be said that it is difficult to generalize about the critics'

¹⁰⁷ *Marāṣil*, 48-49.

handling of extrinsic information, for they differed over the amount of reliance they were willing to place on such materials, and in any case their utilization of them was always desultory and unsystematic.

In a few instances we find that the critics appear to be employing supposed historical information to prove that it was impossible for one scholar to have heard another. When Abū Ḥātim was asked whether Muḥammad b. Sīrīn studied with Abu 'l-Dardā', he rejected the possibility on geographical grounds: "No, they were contemporaries, [but] I do not think that he heard ḥadīth from him. The one was in Syria and the other in al-Baṣra."¹⁰⁸ 'Alī b. al-Madīnī adopted a similar approach when confronted by an isnād indicating transmission between al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Sufyān. He said, "[It is] a Baṣran ḥadīth. Its isnād is interrupted (*munqatī'*) because al-Ḥasan did not hear ḥadīth from al-Ḍaḥḥāk. Al-Ḍaḥḥāk used to be in the desert and al-Ḥasan did not hear ḥadīth from him."¹⁰⁹

More often we find the critics in the awkward position of having to reconcile anecdotal information showing contact between two transmitters with indications derived from isnāds that the two transmitters did *not* study together. One can see that an isnād indicating transmission between two scholars, but not audition, combined with a report representing them as being in the same place at the same time, does constitute something of an argument for the scholars' having studied together. The critics took pains to combat this kind of reasoning. In their view, the question of whether one transmitter heard ḥadīth from another could be determined only by the isnāds. When Abū Zur'a was asked whether al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī met (*laqiya*) any of the Muslim participants in the battle of Badr, he responded,

"He only saw [some of] them. He saw 'Uthmān b. 'Affān and 'Alī." I [i.e. Ibn Abī Ḥātim] said, "Did he hear any ḥadīth from either of them?" He said, "No, on the day that allegiance was sworn to 'Alī, al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī was fourteen years old. He saw 'Alī in Medina. Then 'Alī went to al-Kūfa and al-Baṣra and al-Ḥasan did not meet him after that. [All that] al-Ḥasan said [was], 'I saw al-Zubayr swearing allegiance to 'Alī.'" (*Marāsīl*, 26)

Further on, Abū Zur'a says that the transmission of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī from 'Alī (which had apparently prompted the question of whether

¹⁰⁸ *Marāsīl*, 116.

¹⁰⁹ 'Alī b. al-Madīnī, *ʿIlal*, 55; *Marāsīl*, 33.

al-Ḥasan had studied with ‘Alī) was in reality through the mediation of Samura b. Jundab (i.e. *riwāyat al-Ḥasan ‘an Samura ibn Jundab*). Here we see that, in the determination of study, Abū Zur‘a gave precedence to the evidence of the isnād, namely that Samura b. Jundab acted as an intermediary between al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī and ‘Alī in some of the lines of transmission, over the anecdote indicating that the two transmitters were in the same place at the same time.

One particularly sticky case was al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī’s alleged audition of the famous Companion Ibn ‘Abbās. The critics, who rejected the possibility of his having heard Ibn ‘Abbās, were obliged to explain the report in which he says, “Ibn ‘Abbās preached a sermon to us in al-Baṣra.” ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī says,

[Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī] was in Medina during the time Ibn ‘Abbās was over al-Baṣra, [i.e.] when ‘Alī made him governor and he went to Ṣiffīn. As for the ḥadīth of al-Ḥasan, “Ibn ‘Abbās preached a sermon to us in al-Baṣra,” it is like the statement of Thābit, “Imrān b. al-Ḥuṣayn came to us,” that of Mujāhid, “‘Alī attacked us,” that of al-Ḥasan, “Surāqa b. Mālīk b. Ju‘shum related ḥadīth to them,” and his statement, “Mujāshir b. Mas‘ūd campaigned with us.” Al-Ḥasan did not hear ḥadīth from Ibn ‘Abbās and never saw him.¹¹⁰

As it stands, this is all rather cryptic. In *Marāsīl* (pp. 27–28), Abū Ḥātim explains that when al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said “Ibn ‘Abbās preached a sermon to us,” he meant that Ibn ‘Abbās preached a sermon to the people of al-Baṣra and did not mean to imply that he was present at the time. Bukhārī in addressing the same problem points out the existence of a version of the report which read “Ibn ‘Abbās preached a sermon,” without the “to us.” Tirmidhī, who records this remark, reasons that Bukhārī said that “because Ibn ‘Abbās was in al-Baṣra during the reign of ‘Alī and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī was in Medina during the reigns of ‘Uthmān and ‘Alī.”¹¹¹

In one interesting instance, Abū ‘Alī ‘Abd al-Jabbār al-Khawlānī (fl. 365/975) uses isnād-derived evidence to discredit a certain report ascribed to Abū Idrīs ‘Ā’idh Allāh b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Khawlānī (d. 80/699) describing an encounter with the Companion Mu‘ādh b. Jabal. After enumerating Abū Idrīs’s many merits, he says,

¹¹⁰ ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī, *‘Ilal*, 51; *Marāsīl*, 27. “Surāqa b. Mālīk b. Ju‘shum related ḥadīth to them” does not seem to belong here and is omitted in *Mārāsīl*.

¹¹¹ Tirmidhī, *‘Ilal al-Tirmidhī al-kabīr*, 1:326.

[Despite all of this], Abū Idrīs does not say, "Mu'ādh b. Jabal transmitted to me,"—and he did not transmit to him—or "I saw Mu'ādh,"—and he did not see him—even with the celebrity of those scholars of ḥadīth who transmitted from him.¹¹²

ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Khawḷānī argues that given the excellence of those who studied with Abū Idrīs, if he had taught a ḥadīth with terminology showing that he had heard Mu'ādh, it surely would have been preserved. Since no isnād indicates that Abū Idrīs met Mu'ādh b. Jabal, the report describing their encounter must be false.

E. *The Use of Dates*

It is appropriate here to address the critics' use of dates, in particular deathdates (*wafayāt*). As was the case with the other forms of extrinsic information, the critics never used dates to establish the possibility of one scholar studying with another, but only to vitiate it: and this only in rare instances. Not all critics showed an interest in dates. There are, for example, almost no dates in Ibn Abī Ḥātim's *Jarh*. Nor is this lack of interest in dates surprising. Because the critic believed that he could determine whether one transmitter actually heard another, which was his main concern, just by examining isnāds; he cannot have regarded dates as anything but secondary. At best the examination of deathdates could have told him whether two scholars were alive at the same time.

It is in the works of Bukhārī that we find the most pronounced interest in dates.¹¹³ His *al-Taʾrīkh al-kabīr* provides deathdates for some scholars while his *al-Taʾrīkh al-ṣaghīr* is primarily a collection of dates, containing a large number of deathdates, some birthdates and many dated or datable reports which are given as proof that a transmitter was alive in a certain year. However, even in these two works Bukhārī rarely makes explicit reference to dates in addressing the question of whether one transmitter heard another. In one example in his *al-Taʾrīkh al-ṣaghīr* (1:187), Bukhārī discusses the teachers of the transmitter Yūsuf b. ʿAbd Allāh b. al-Ḥārith:

¹¹² ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Khawḷānī, *Taʾrīkh Dārayyā*, ed. Saʿīd al-Afghānī, 2d ed. (Damascus, 1975), 69.

¹¹³ ʿAlī b. al-Madīnī gives the deathdates of some transmitters in his *ʿIlal* (pp. 36–40, 74–75), but we do not find him using them to determine the integrity of isnāds. Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's *ʿIlal* also contains some dates.

‘Abd Allāh b. Bakr b. ‘Abd Allāh al-Muzanī [said,] “I heard Yūsuf b. ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥārith [saying,] ‘I was with al-Aḥnaf b. Qays.’” [This Yūsuf] is Yūsuf the grandson of Ibn Sīrīn and [his father] ‘Abd Allāh is Abu ‘l-Walīd. [Yūsuf] transmitted from (*rawā ‘an*) ‘Ā’isha and Abū Hurayra. I do not think (*lā nufakkir*)¹¹⁴ that he heard ḥadīth from them because there are nearly twelve years between the death of ‘Ā’isha and that of al-Aḥnaf.

Bukhārī accepts that Yūsuf b. ‘Abd Allāh b. al-Ḥārith met al-Aḥnaf b. Qays. Yūsuf transmitted from ‘Ā’isha and the famous Companion Abū Hurayra, but it is not clear that he actually heard ḥadīth from them. Bukhārī’s argument seems to be that Yūsuf’s meeting al-Aḥnaf is no proof that he could have studied with ‘Ā’isha and Abū Hurayra, because ‘Ā’isha (d. 58/677) had died years before al-Aḥnaf (d. 67/686 or 72/691), and Abū Hurayra died about the same time as ‘Ā’isha. In fact, Bukhārī is inclined to doubt that Yūsuf studied with ‘Ā’isha and Abū Hurayra, perhaps on the basis that Yūsuf’s being the grandson of a man who died in 110/729 (namely Ibn Sīrīn) meant that he must have been very young when he met al-Aḥnaf. Bukhārī’s efforts in this domain were limited by the dearth of dates at his disposal. In a survey of the first volume of his *al-Ta’rīkh al-kabīr*, Prof. Franz Rosenthal found that he gives deathdates in less than seven percent of the entries and birthdates in less than one-half of one percent. The paucity of deathdates in the early works on ḥadīth criticism and their proliferation in the later ones leads one to accept the suggestion put forward by Prof. Rosenthal that most of the deathdates given for early figures are later scholarly reconstructions.¹¹⁵

References to dates are equally rare in the works of other critics. In what became one of the proverbial examples of the usefulness of the study of History, Ibn Ḥibbān, who otherwise seems to have been largely unconcerned with dates, cites a report about an unnamed man who tells Ismā‘īl b. ‘Ayyāsh (d. 182/798) that he took ḥadīth from Khālīd b. Ma’dān in 113/731. Ismā‘īl b. ‘Ayyāsh replies, “You claim that you heard ḥadīth from Khālīd seven years after his death.”

¹¹⁴ The 1986 Beirut edition quoted here is a corrected version of the 1977 Aleppo edition—also edited by Maḥmūd Ibrāhīm Zāyid and published in two volumes—which has “*lā nunkir*” instead of “*lā nufakkir*” in this passage (1:159), yielding the opposite sense.

¹¹⁵ F. Rosenthal, *A History of Muslim Historiography*, 14, n. 2. Lawrence I. Conrad is also skeptical about accuracy of the birthdates given for early scholars; “Seven and the *Tasbī‘*,” *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 31 (1988):62–73.

It is interesting to note that Ibn Ḥibbān regards this as an instance of someone inadvertently telling a lie because he knew nothing about the discipline of ḥadīth rather than as a case of outright fraud.¹¹⁶ In a passage in the *Taqdima* (p. 250), Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān objects to a report that Ibn ʿAwn saw ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Abī Laylā in al-Kūfa in 91/709 on the grounds that Ibn Abī Laylā had died in 88/706. Rather than denying Ibn ʿAwn's contact with him, Ibn Abī Ḥātim surprisingly rejects the date and not the audition: he concludes that the date given in the report was simply ten years too late! More frequently we come across reports where a vague disjunction in time between two transmitters, rather than actual dates, disallows the possibility that they met. Such discussions most often deal with the earliest Muslims, the Companions and Followers, perhaps because the extrinsic information about them was more copious. For instance, when Yaḥyā b. Saʿīd al-Qaṭṭān was asked whether Hilāl b. Yasāf heard ḥadīth from Abū Masʿūd, he denied the possibility on the grounds that Abū Masʿūd had died in the days of ʿAlī.¹¹⁷

Despite Bukhārī's concern for dates, one must not imagine that he disregarded information derived from the study of isnāds, or that he even regarded it as inferior in value for ascertaining whether one scholar heard ḥadīth from another. As was the case with other types of extrinsic information, we find the critics gave isnāds precedence over dates. Bukhārī on more than one occasion evaluated the accuracy of deathdates on the basis of isnāds. In one instance he questioned the accuracy of the deathdate of a transmitter given by one of his descendents because isnāds indicated that two comparatively late transmitters had studied with him:

One of the members of the family of Abū Rawwād told me that ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz [b. Abī Rawwād] died around the year [1]50. [However,] I think it was later than that because Abū Nuʿaym and Khallād heard him and they did not hear Ibn Jurayj.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁶ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Majrūḥīn*, 1:71 (Ismāʿīl b. ʿAyyāsh's name is incorrectly given as "Ismāʿīl b. ʿAbbās" here); al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī, *al-Madkhal ilā maʿrifat al-Iklīl*, ed. and trans. James Robson (London, 1953), 34–35 (Arabic), 35 (English); al-Khatīb al-Baghdādī, *Kifāya*, 119; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 643; Sakhāwī, *Iʿlān*, 277; Taqī al-Dīn al-Tamīmī, *al-Ṭabaqāt al-saniya fi tarājim al-Hanaʿiya*, ed. ʿAbd al-Fattāḥ Muḥammad al-Ḥilw (Only vol. 1 published, Cairo, 1390/1970), 1:32–33.

¹¹⁷ *Taqdima*, 243.

¹¹⁸ Bukhārī, *al-Taʾrīkh al-ṣaghīr*, 2:105.

Bukhārī reasoned that Ibn Abī Rawwād could not have died in 150/767 because two of his students did not study with Ibn Jurayj, whose death in 151/768 was not disputed. He was assuming that the students, if given the chance, would have attended the classes of the more prominent Ibn Jurayj before studying with Ibn Abī Rawwād. For similar reasons Bukhārī doubted the deathdate given for Abū Bakr b. Shu‘ayb. Faced with the statement, “They say that Abū Bakr b. Shu‘ayb b. al-Ḥabḥāb b. Ṣāliḥ al-Mi‘walī¹¹⁹ al-Azdī al-Baṣrī died in 164,” he wrote, “There is some doubt about [the date of] his death because Qutayba b. Sa‘īd heard ḥadīth from him.”¹²⁰ In the mind of Bukhārī, it was improbable that Qutayba b. Sa‘īd, who died in 240/854, could have attended the classes of a man who was alleged to have predeceased him by 76 years.

VI. Further Developments

A. The Controversy over the Term “From”

Instances of transmissions marked in isnāds by the term “from” (*an*) posed special problems for the critics. “From” by itself was ambiguous. The statement “X from Y” did not establish that X heard the ḥadīth from Y and it did not exclude that possibility. Rather, it only indicated that the ḥadīth which reached X ultimately came from Y, leaving open the possibility of intermediate transmitters between them. Ibn Khallād al-Rāmahurmuzī reports that one jurist said,

When [a teacher] says, “X transmitted to us”—or “X informed us”—“*from Y*,” rather than, “X transmitted to us that Y transmitted to him,” or some equivalent expression; there is a possibility that there was another man between X, who transmitted to him, and Y. This is because it is not unheard of for a person to say, “We were transmitted to from the Prophet such and such,” and “X transmitted to us from Mālik and Shāfi‘ī,” regardless of whether that is said in reference to someone whom the speaker is known not to have seen or regarding someone about whom that is not known, because the significance of his saying “from” is only that the ḥadīth [ultimately] goes back to him. This usage is common in everyday speech and current among the people.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ The printed text has “al-‘Umūli” here. Ibn al-Athīr supplies the correct reading in *Lubāb*, 3:238.

¹²⁰ Bukhārī, *al-Ta’rīkh al-ṣaḡhīr*, 2:147.

¹²¹ *Al-Muḥaddith al-fāṣil*, 450–51. See also al-Khaṭīb al-Baḡhdādī, *Kifāya*, 291.

In the introduction to his *Ṣaḥīḥ* (1:22–28), Muslim argues that “from” should be taken as being indicative of audition in the cases where the two transmitters in question lived at the same time and there exists no proof that they did not meet. However, Muslim refers to a contemporary whom he does not name—probably Bukhārī or ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī¹²²—who insisted that “X from Y” could not be accepted as an unmediated transmission until evidence is found that X at some time heard ḥadīth from Y. In other words, at least one transmission of X from Y must be described by a term indicating that they met. Muslim rejects this critic’s view and claims that it is unprecedented, asserting that earlier critics subjected the transmissions marked by “from” to special scrutiny only in cases where the transmitter in question was notorious for doctoring isnāds (*tadlīs*).

Muslim argues that the proposed restriction is at once too lax and too strict. In the first place, it does not guarantee that any particular transmission is unmediated. Just because X heard one ḥadīth directly from Y does not mean that all of X’s transmissions from Y were unmediated. Although the critics, as we have seen, normally regarded the presence of intermediaries as excluding the possibility of audition, there were accepted instances of scholars hearing ḥadīth directly from a particular transmitter and from that transmitter’s students from him. Muslim analyzes a group of four ḥadīth with isnāds in which the transmission between two scholars is marked by “from.” All of the transmitters in question are either Companions or Followers and there is plenty of evidence in favor of their having met, e.g. Hishām b. ‘Urwa from his father ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr and ‘Urwa b. al-Zubayr from ‘Ā’isha. For the propagator of the new doctrine, the fact that these transmitters were known to have met would have been sufficient to eliminate the possibility that intervening names had been dropped from the isnād. Then for each ḥadīth, Muslim supplies an alternate version of the isnād in which one or two intermediaries come between the two transmitters. He thereby shows that names had in fact been dropped from the first isnāds and that the

¹²² Tradition has ascribed this doctrine to both Bukhārī and ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī; Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 224; id., *Ṣiḥāna*, 128; Nawawī, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*, 5 vols. (Cairo, 1283–85), 1:61; Dhahabī, *Ṣiḥar*, 12:573; Ibn Rushayd, *Sanan*, *passim*, esp. p. 31 (This entire book is a discussion of the term “an.”); Ibn Rajab, *Sharḥ*, 272; E.E. Salisbury, “Contributions from Original Sources to our Knowledge of the Science of Muslim Tradition,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 7 (1862):96; I. Goldziher, *Muhammedanische Studien*, 2:248; trans. *Muslim Studies*, 2:229; William Marçais, “Le Taqrīb de en-Nawawī,” *Journal asiatique*, ninth series, 16 (1900):484, n. 4.

new criterion had failed to detect this. Muslim says that if this innovator wants to be absolutely sure that no names were omitted, he must have information substantiating audition at every link from that very isnād.

The second point that Muslim makes against the new stipulation is that it would lead to the rejection of some ḥadīth universally reckoned authentic, if it were strictly applied. Muslim cites a number of Follower-Companion pairs whose transmission is marked by "from." He says that these transmissions are universally accepted as valid; however, nowhere in the entire corpus of ḥadīth is there explicit information that the two scholars studied together. The application of the new criterion to these transmissions would require that they be rejected and this Muslim clearly regards as absurd.¹²³

B. *The Collective Accreditation of the Earliest Muslims*

The effort to introduce greater rigor into ḥadīth criticism by insisting that there be evidence transmitters met before accepting transmissions marked by the term "from" was well received, for the critics were always anxious to project an image of exacting standards to outsiders. Muslim's first objection, that the increased rigor was to a large extent illusory because the new restriction did not ensure that any particular transmission indicated by "from" was unmediated, fell on deaf ears. Nawawī (d. 676/1278) in his commentary on Muslim, *Sharḥ Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (1:62), writes,

When the meeting [of two transmitters] is established, cohesiveness [in regard to any particular transmission] is likely. The issue is based on likelihood. We are satisfied with that.¹²⁴

However, Muslim's second point was much more disturbing, for the term "from" was common in the transmissions of the Companions and the Followers. To provide a pretext for rejecting authentic ḥadīth would be playing into the hands of the Kūfans.

The adjustment necessary to rectify this difficulty took the form of the new dogma which decreed that all of the earliest Muslims

¹²³ Juynboll gives a different interpretation of Muslim's argument in "On the Origins of Arabic Prose," 174. Robson discusses it in "Standards Applied by Muslim Traditionists," 475-76. For some interesting remarks on Muslim and 'an, see Ibn Hajar, *Nukat*, 2:595-98.

¹²⁴ See also Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 220-26.

were to be considered reliable for the purposes of ḥadīth transmission. The objection to a ḥadīth with an interrupted isnād was due to the possibility that the transmitter whose name was not mentioned was unreliable. Ibn Ḥibbān describes his treatment of the transmissions of the Companions:

We accepted the reports of the Companions from the Prophet so long as they related them from the Prophet, even if they did not show audition in all of what they related—and we know for certain that one of them sometimes heard a report from another Companion and related it from the Prophet without mentioning the person from whom he heard it—because they are all reliable, leading, and sovereign authorities. God declared the likes of the Companions to be above weakness attaching to them.¹²⁵

In the case of the Companions, it would not matter that they did not always name their intermediaries because these intermediaries would normally have been Companions themselves and therefore were bound to have been reliable.¹²⁶

It is difficult to trace the origin of this doctrine, which G.H.A. Juynboll has termed “the collective *ta’dīl* of the Companions.”¹²⁷ The earliest explicit formulations seem to be those of Ibn Abī Ḥātim.¹²⁸ In the *Taqdima* (p. 7), he declares,

¹²⁵ *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:122–23; Ibn Rushayd, *Sanan*, 119. See also Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ, *Muqaddima*, 211–12.

¹²⁶ Al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kifāya*, 385.

¹²⁷ Juynboll discusses this dogma in *Muslim Tradition*, 190–206 and *The Authenticity of the Tradition Literature: Discussions in Modern Egypt* (Leiden, 1969), 55–99.

¹²⁸ In the introduction to his edition of Muslim’s *Kitāb al-Tamyīz* (pp. 53–54), M.M. al-Aḥẓamī states that there can be no doubt that the doctrine of the collective accreditation of the Companions was held by Abū Ḥanīfa, Mālik, Shāfi‘ī, Yaḥyā b. Ma‘īn, ‘Alī b. al-Madīnī, Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal, Bukhārī, Muslim, Abū Zur‘a, Abū Dāwūd, Abū Ḥātim, Tirmidhī and Nasā‘ī. He, however, supplies no documentation for this assertion and I have not found any myself. As far as Muslim is concerned, such a belief would hardly be compatible with the discussion of “from” in his *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

On the basis of a passage in *Kitāb Ikhtilāf al-ḥadīth*, J. Schacht maintains that Shāfi‘ī subscribed to the doctrine of the collective *ta’dīl* of the Companions (*Origins*, 19). This may be a misapprehension. The passage in question concerns differing reports from two Companions, one an Anṣārī and one not, regarding the murder of one of the Anṣārīs. It reads, “The victim was one of the Anṣārīs. If each [of the Companions] is reliable (*thiqa*)—and in our opinion each is reliable by the grace of God—the Anṣārīs are more deserving of attention in regard to the information about it than anyone else.” That is all other things being equal, reports from Anṣārīs are to be preferred in matters concerning the Anṣārīs. It is unclear whether this can be construed as an endorsement of the collective accreditation of all of the

[God] banished from [the Companions] any doubt, lying, error, suspicion and slander and He called them the upright ones of the Muslim community (*ʿudūl al-umma*).

Ibn Abī Ḥātim seems to place the next generation of Muslims, the Followers, on the same plane as the Companions. They, he asserts, also possess a status which precludes "any cause for slander attaching to them or any disgrace reaching them."¹²⁹ To Ibn Abī Ḥātim's mind, there is no point in attempting to make any distinction between individual Followers for they are all trustworthy authorities. Others have attempted to insinuate themselves into their number by the suppression of the names of intermediaries. They were by no means

Companions. In fact, Shāfiʿi's point is that the non-Anṣārī Companion did make a mistake, despite somehow being "reliable."

There are, nevertheless, several passages that, at least with hindsight, appear to be references to the doctrine. It would seem that it is embodied in its essentials in a report ascribed to the Companion al-Barā' b. 'Āzib: "We did not hear directly from the Prophet all that we transmitted from him to you. But [some] we heard directly and [some] our associates related to us. However, we do not lie." This report is already found in Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal's *ʿIlal* (p. 408). That work is basically a collection of reports, often with no discernable connection existing between them and usually with no commentary. Without any context or commentary, it is impossible for us to determine exactly what Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal thought this report meant.

The report from al-Barā' is also quoted by Fasawī in *Maʿrifā* (2:633-34) in the context of a discussion of the antiquity of the practice of doctoring isnāds. After mentioning several prominent scholars who were guilty of this, he cites a report apparently pertinent to our question in which the Companion Anas b. Mālīk is asked whether he heard a particular ḥadīth directly from the Prophet. Anas replies, "Yes, someone who does not lie narrated it to me. By God, we did not use to tell lies and we did not even know what lying was." After a few remarks on *tadlīs* by famous scholars, Fasawī quotes the report from al-Barā' cited earlier by Aḥmad b. Ḥanbal. Later scholars would cite the report from al-Barā' and similar ones as evidence for the doctrine; e.g. al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kifāya*, 385-86; Ibn Rushayd, *Sanan*, 44, 117-18. Remarkably, al-Ḥākim al-Nīsābūrī (*Maʿrifā*, 14) cites a version of the report in a discussion of the way the Companions used to scrutinize the reports from their fellows before accepting them.

Fasawī's work contains other hints. To Saʿd b. Ibrāhīm are ascribed the words (1:681; also Abū Zurʿa al-Dimashqī, *Taʾrīkh*, 1:546-47; al-Khaṭīb al-Baghdādī, *Kifāya*, 32): "Only reliable people (*thiqāt*) transmitted from the Prophet." Presumably this is a reference to the Companions. In discussing a particular ḥadīth, Fasawī writes (1:348): "Every one of those named in this ḥadīth is a proof by himself (*ḥujja ʿala ʾl-infrād*). Yaḥyā [b. Saʿīd] is an expert in ḥadīth. Saʿīd b. Yasār is a reliable (*thiqa*) Medinese." Then he continues: "*aṣḥāb al-Nabī ṣaghīruhum wa-kabīruhum wa-aʿlāhum wa-adnāhum wa-* . . . [gap in the text] *dhī ḥujja*." This passage, as it stands, is problematic; nevertheless the import that all of the Companions are to be considered reliable seems to be present. It is noteworthy that Ibn Abī Ḥātim and Ibn Ḥibbān do not cite any of these passages.

¹²⁹ *Taqdima*, 9.

the equals of the true Followers and it is necessary that their pretensions be exposed.

Ibn Ḥibbān deals with the question of collective *ta'dīl* in the introductions to both *Majrūhīn* and his *Ṣaḥīḥ*. In the former (1:33–34), he writes,

If someone asks, "How could you impugn (*jaraḥta*) someone who lived after the Companions and yet refuse to do that to the Companions, even though negligence and error (*al-saḥw wa-'l-khaṭa'*) were found among the Companions of the Prophet just as they were among the transmitters of ḥadīth who came after them?" he is answered, "God declared the Companions of His Prophet to be above the defamation of any slanderer. He protected them from the disparaging of any detractor and made them like guiding stars."

The formulation of collective *ta'dīl* arrived at by Ibn Ḥibbān differs in two ways from that of Ibn Abī Ḥātim. In the first place, it extends only to the Companions. Presumably, in Ibn Ḥibbān's mind, the ranks of the Followers included both reliable and unreliable transmitters. The second point of difference is that Ibn Ḥibbān's interpretation was less comprehensive. In the *Taqdīm* Ibn Abī Ḥātim appears to regard the Companions and Followers as virtually impeccable. Ibn Ḥibbān does say, "God declared the Companions to be above weakness (*wahan*) adhering to them."¹³⁰ On the other hand, he explicitly acknowledges that they occasionally suppressed names of their intermediaries¹³¹ and made errors in transmission.¹³² After all he says, they, like later transmitters, "were not infallible."¹³³

VII. Conclusion

Consistency in the authentication of ḥadīth was the goal of the critics. By the time of Ibn Abī Ḥātim, technical criticism was already fully shaped in all of its practical aspects. Although the critics remained receptive to attempts to introduce greater rigor in the authentication process, they ran up against the fundamental problem that if standards were made too strict, few ḥadīth could meet them. Nowhere

¹³⁰ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:123.

¹³¹ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:122.

¹³² Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:115.

¹³³ Ibn Ḥibbān, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:115.

is this better illustrated than in Ibn Ḥibbān's discussion of Ḥammād b. Salama. Those who would reject his transmissions say that he made mistakes, doctored isnāds, paraphrased ḥadīth rather than transmitting them verbatim and transmitted reports unknown to his contemporaries. Ibn Ḥibbān concedes each point, but he counters that if one were to reject the transmissions of all those who did these things, there would be no ḥadīth left.¹³⁴

The introduction of the dogma of the collective reliability of the earliest Muslims, a technical innovation which seemingly must be ascribed to Ibn Abī Ḥātim, addressed this second point. It allowed the term "from" to be more strictly interpreted, but rendered the matter virtually meaningless by neutralizing its effect in sphere where it would have been the greatest, namely in the transmissions of the earliest Muslims. Thus, the critics could maintain the image of increased rigor without paying the price of rejecting more ḥadīth.

When Ibn Abī Ḥātim framed the terminology of personality criticism used in *Jarḥ* into a strict hierarchy, he too embellished the image of rigor that criticism projected. His immediate aim was to systematize the most ambitious work of personality criticism undertaken up to this time. (It will be remembered that Bukhārī's *al-Ta'riḥ al-kabīr*, although executed on a similar scale, is much less concerned with evaluating the reliability of the transmitters.) Ibn Abī Ḥātim's arrangement, like the strict interpretation of the term "from," was met with favor by later generations of scholars. However, again, like the stricter interpretation of "from," Ibn Abī Ḥātim's innovation does not seem to have had any effect on the actual authentication of ḥadīth.

It is perhaps natural after examining the conspicuously divergent views concerning a transmitter like 'Abd Allāh b. Lahī'a to wonder how one can speak of consistency and criticism in the same breath. It is a matter of perspective. The critics (with a few exceptions) agreed that the transmissions of Ibn Lahī'a's students varied greatly in their reliability. For the critics this variance in reliability was the salient fact and for this they had hard evidence in the form of the

¹³⁴ *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:114-18. This reasoning recalls 'Abd al-Raḥmān b. Maḥdī's statement about the second of his three grades of transmitters, those who make mistakes but are for the most part reliable. He says, "If the ḥadīth of this [kind of transmitter] were rejected, the ḥadīth of the people would disappear;" Muslim, *Tamyīz*, 132; *Jarḥ*, 1(1):38; 'Uqaylī, *Du'afā'*, 1:13.

ḥadīth transmitted by the students. The biographical inferences the critics derived from the study of the Ibn Lahī'a's ḥadīth served to humanize the stark fact of the variable reliability of his transmissions in a fashion that would perhaps be pedagogically advantageous, but these inferences always occupied a decidedly secondarily position. This is not to say that the critics were not curious about the reason for the variations in the transmissions from 'Abd Allāh b. Lahī'a, for the abundance of explanations they proposed shows clearly that they were. But for the critics, who were above all concerned with authenticating ḥadīth, the actual reason for the variation was truly a matter of little importance. This, however, is naturally not the case for the modern scholar who comes to this material seeking to write history or biography, rather than with the aim of authenticating ḥadīth, and therefore it is important that this difference always be kept in mind.

In at least one respect the critics did stray precariously close to arbitrariness and this was in the treatment of the ḥadīth with converging lines of transmission. It has been shown here that the critics of ḥadīth were not blind to the implications of this circumstance and they judged these cases individually. Their efforts in this domain appear to have been subjective and it is not clear how it could have been otherwise. The legitimacy of the ḥadīth with converging lines of transmission was probably the technical issue of the greatest contentiousness between the adherents of ḥadīth and their opponents, the Kūfans, who for the most part argued that the unparalleled ḥadīth should be rejected out of hand. It is scarcely possible to overestimate the significance of this issue, for it seems that the majority of ḥadīth were of this type: Ibn Ḥibbān went so far as to assert that there was no other kind.¹³⁵

The attitude of the critics towards the authentication of the unparalleled ḥadīth reflects not only their recognition that the convergence of the lines of transmission was not an unambiguous indication—after all, one can easily conceive of the exceptional circumstances which would lead to a certain ḥadīth being preserved by only one of a teacher's students—but also the critics' belief that such things as authentic ḥadīth existed. In the end, I think, any estimation of the efficacy of ḥadīth criticism as a means for authenticating ḥadīth

¹³⁵ *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 1:118; Ḥāzimī, *Shurūṭ*, 41; Ibn Ḥajar, *Nuzḥa*, 20.

must turn on the question of whether there were any authentic ḥadīth at all. If there were, it must be granted that the critics devised the best possible means for identifying them. Their basic method even resembles “Schacht’s Common-Link Theory”¹³⁶ in respect to the attention both approaches focus on the convergence of isnāds on a single transmitter. If, however, there never were any authentic ḥadīth, the efforts of the critics were foredoomed to failure through no fault of their own.

¹³⁶ *Origins*, 171–75. This theory has been exploited by a number of scholars. For a notable application of it, see G.H.A. Juynboll, *Muslim Tradition*, 96–133. Recently, the validity of this theory has been the subject of some close scrutiny, see Michael Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma: A Source-critical Study* (Cambridge, 1981), 107–16; id., “Eschatology and the Dating of Traditions,” *Princeton Papers in Arabic and Islam* 1(1992):23–47; Harald Motzki, “Quo vadis, Ḥadīth-Forschung? Eine kritische Untersuchung von G.H.A. Juynboll: ‘Nāfi’ the mawlā of Ibn ‘Umar, and his position in Muslim Ḥadīth literature,” *Der Islam* 73 (1996):40–54.

CONCLUSION

In the *Taqdima* we find a mirror of Ibn Abī Ḥātim's attitudes. Following in the footsteps of his father, he became a critic of ḥadīth and, like all of the critics, he was horrified by what he perceived as the transformation of the Muslim community from a single unity into a welter of competing sects. The critics of ḥadīth ascribed this pernicious absence of uniformity within the Muslim community to the inconsistent exploitation of the sources of religious doctrine. It was their view that, if Muslims were to confine themselves to drawing their religious doctrines in a systematic fashion from the two indisputable bases of Muslim thought, the Qur'ān and ḥadīth, the community's internal doctrinal conflicts would disappear. Religious matters not addressed in the Qur'ān and ḥadīth, the critics argued, were to be left in abeyance, in the belief that there was no way to deal with them that would not precipitate further disagreement. The use of the ḥadīth as a source of doctrine was especially difficult because of the many contradictions they contained. The critics addressed this problem using ḥadīth criticism, which, by its reliance on what they considered to be objective criteria, appeared to offer a consistent way to authenticate ḥadīth.

Ibn Abī Ḥātim wrote the *Taqdima* to justify to a sympathetic Hijāzian audience the techniques of ḥadīth criticism. He invokes the precedence of certain well-respected Hijāzian forebears, whom he attempts to depict as critics of ḥadīth. To achieve this end, Ibn Abī Ḥātim gathers a great collection of transmitted reports, which although varied in character and form, all depict these early scholars as sharing the characteristics of the critics of Ibn Abī Ḥātim's time. Although we can find no record of a specific motivation for his undertaking such a defense of ḥadīth criticism; the competition between the critics and their rivals, the Kūfans, which split the Muslim world and raged with special ferocity in Ibn Abī Ḥātim's hometown of al-Rayy, is likely to have provided the necessary impetus.

It would be of great interest to know the reaction of Ibn Abī Ḥātim's contemporaries to the *Taqdima*. However, the sources tell us nothing. We may note, though, that the basic thesis of the work, which may be distilled down to the assertion that certain scholars

of the generation of Mālik and Sufyān al-Thawrī were critics of ḥadīth, was not called into question, either by the critics or by their opponents. Consultation of later biographies shows that figures like Mālik and Sufyān al-Thawrī bore easily the mantle of the critic. Both the critics and their rivals agreed on this point, but for entirely different reasons.

Although the association of ḥadīth criticism with certain famous figures increased its prestige, this association did carry a price since it undermined the integrity of ḥadīth criticism. In making early scholars like Mālik, Awzā'ī and Shu'ba critics, Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his colleagues brought upon themselves the obligation of coming to terms with the alleged critical judgements ascribed to these scholars, many of which were wholly inconsistent with the findings of later critics. A modern scholar might never ask why Shu'ba failed to study with Abu 'l-Zubayr al-Makkī, but those who regarded Shu'ba as a critic had to account for his blunder. Abu 'l-Zubayr was reliable according to the standards of ḥadīth criticism, so there was no way that Shu'ba's alleged rejection of him could be explained in those terms. The opponents of the critics avidly exploited the contradictions between the judgements of those early scholars alleged to be ḥadīth critics and those of later critics. They pointed to these discrepancies not as proof that the earlier scholars were not critics, but as proof of the fundamental arbitrariness which they suspected lurked at the heart of ḥadīth criticism.¹ As has been shown, the reports ascribing Shu'ba's alleged rejection of Abu 'l-Zubayr al-Makkī to considerations extrinsic to the latter's role as a transmitter of ḥadīth, namely Shu'ba's disgust for the various manifestations of Abu 'l-Zubayr's moral delinquency, constituted a kind of explanation for Shu'ba's rejection of Abu 'l-Zubayr. Although these reports provided plausible explanations for Shu'ba's behavior which were, no doubt, consonant with the current understanding of human psychology, they necessarily compromised any impression of methodological rigor on the part of Shu'ba by making him appear capricious. Not surprisingly, the critics did not usually make reference to such reports in situations where their aim was to defend ḥadīth criticism from the charge of arbitrariness. They, nevertheless, could not defend the validity of the discrepant judgements, which they knew well were

¹ See above, pp. 91–92.

erroneous. The critics resorted instead to somewhat tenuous arguments to the effect that these early scholars, although wrong, were at least not arbitrary.² The modern student can cut through this Gordian knot by declaring these early scholars not to be critics at all. That neither Ibn Abī Ḥātim nor any of his fellows availed themselves of this expedient shows how valuable they regarded the prestige of these early scholars.

Despite the trouble the discrepant judgements caused for the critics of Ibn Abī Ḥātim's day, they do provide the disinterested observer with a vindication of ḥadīth criticism as a consistent technique for the authentication of ḥadīth. The great attention that was focused on the discrepant judgements, as evidenced by the proliferation of competing theories put forward to account for their existence, shows that they were exceptional, proving that the ḥadīth critics did attain a high degree of consistency. It is the rejection of these judgements by the majority of the critics—even when these judgements were ascribed to the most esteemed of their forebears—that demonstrates that this consistency was rooted in the methodical application of set rules and procedures, and not in the reliance on authorities.

Whatever the response was to the *Taqdima*, the program of the critics was highly influential. It is, nonetheless, unclear whether the critics as a movement even survived the end of the fourth/tenth century in a form which Ibn Abī Ḥātim and his contemporaries would have recognized. Further research is necessary to clarify this point, but it is not unlikely that the movement's untimely demise was linked to its rejection of the use of human reason. The uncompromised position of the critics toward human reason possessed a certain intellectual appeal, but because of inherent practical limitations, it could never become very popular. In the legal sphere, the critics simply could not address questions not covered by the Qur'ān and ḥadīth and such questions were bound to arise daily. In the realm of theology, the exclusive reliance on scriptural authority (in the form of the Qur'ān and ḥadīth) meant that the critics' theology was crippled in interconfessional polemic. Furthermore, with the passage of time even the critics' central activity of authenticating ḥadīth became both unnecessary and largely impossible. This, rather ironically, was the result of the success enjoyed by the compilations of the early

² See, for example, Tirmidhī's *Kitāb al-'Ilal* at the end of his *Ṣaḥīḥ*.

critics like Muslim and Bukhārī. The criticism of ḥadīth depended on the more or less free flow of ḥadīth through many lines of transmission and these channels began to dry up as soon as scholars came to focus their attention on the great ḥadīth collections. This was a gradual process, although its effects can already be detected by the middle of the fourth/tenth century.

The great collections of ḥadīth remain the most enduring legacy of the critics and to this day these texts continue to be studied and consulted throughout the Muslim world. Although their role in the history of Muslim religious thought has not been fully assessed, it seems probable that the appearance of these collections had more to do with the ḥadīth of the Prophet gaining an exalted status in Muslim religious thought than any theoretical argument. With these works the critics put in the hands of non-specialists the practical means for the exploitation of the ḥadīth. It was also through these works that the critics defined what came to be largely accepted as the common core of the Muslim identity. Although the critics never realized their dream of banishing dissension from the Muslim world, they did provide a charge of ballast for the Community to steady it in its journey down through the ages.

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